



1941

Satirical Tendencies in Modern American Drama

Marie H. Kelly
Loyola University Chicago

Recommended Citation

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SATIRICAL TENDENCIES
IN MODERN AMERICAN DRAMA
1880-1940

BY

MARIE H. KELLY

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF ARTS IN
LOYOLA UNIVERSITY
JUNE 1941

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

| | | |
|--------------|---|-----|
| INTRODUCTION | Terms defined. Modern. Drama. Varieties of Satire. | i |
| CHAPTER I | THE NATURE AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF SATIRE IN THE AMERICAN THEATRE. Historic Backgrounds. Early American Types. A Survey of the Modern Period in American drama. | 1 |
| CHAPTER II | THE SATIRE OF SOCIAL AND DOMESTIC LIFE. Social position. Shams of society. Marriage and divorce. Family rela- tions. Conflict of Sexes. | 49 |
| CHAPTER III | THE SATIRE OF PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS. Politics. The Theatre. Religion. The Business World. | 84 |
| CHAPTER IV | WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH. Military service. Anti-war plays. The younger generation. Local gov- ernment. Social conflict and econ- omic stress. Plays of the "Leftists". The historic trend. | 116 |
| CONCLUSION | Effects of satire in drama. The future of satire in American drama. | 154 |

PREFACE

PREFACE

Many satiric dramas have appeared between 1880 and the present time but there is very little written about the satirical dramatic works of American playwrights. Apparently plays written in this mood have not been collected, classified, and studied in the light of their satirical aspects. It is therefore my purpose to trace the main line of satire and its related motives in dramatic literature in the United States during this period. I shall clearly designate and define all varieties of satiric dramas, and I shall also point out the differences in satirical attack between the earlier plays and the later ones of the modern era. The plays which have been selected will best exemplify the various types of satire. They will range from those which sting with caustic criticism to those rollicking versions which ring with merriment in spite of their underlying ridicule.

Many dramatic works of high literary calibre will have to be eliminated, while others less worthy will be emphasized because of the nature of this study. I have taken great care to choose the most representative plays of this genre. As far as possible I shall discuss at least one satiric work of each of the outstanding dramatists of this country who have appeared since the time Bronson Howard stood at the threshold of modern drama in the United States. This thesis will not be developed entirely in chronological order, since a more interesting study can be made by grouping the plays into categories of human activities or motives which have inspired American dramatists to write satirically.

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The fine arts having come to us through the ages by a kind of evolutionary process are basically as old as mankind. An endeavor to define any one of them usually results in vague and limited definitions. The terms of this treatise are ill-fitted to precise definitions. The word modern is but a relative and temporary term. Today drama is a word which is so extended in meaning that it may refer to anything from a written work of high literary value to a mediocre moving-picture performance. The term satire has so many off-shoots that it is difficult to determine its outermost bounds. Notwithstanding the difficulties presented in attempting to find suitable definitions for the principal terms of this thesis, it will be necessary at the outset to make clear what they mean in so far as they are used in this study. Anita Block, a dramatic critic, a play reader, and a lecturer on the drama draws a distinct line between the terms modern and contemporary in reference to periods of American drama in her book entitled The Changing World in Plays and Theatre. In the introductory chapter she discusses the differences between these terms and sets a definite limit to the modern period.

The terms modern and contemporary are in no sense synonymous. There is a distinct line of cleavage between them, caused by the World War with its vast consequences of upheaval, individual as well as social, which divides the modern period and our own contemporary period into two distinct epochs.¹

By the same manner of deduction, Miss Block might have divided the contemporary period into two stages. The financial panic of 1929 which precipitated the doleful period of depression, obviously ushered in that

¹
P. 8.

economic, social, and moral upheaval of the later post-war years. With the exception of a few anti-war dramas and some mildly militant social plays of the immediate after-the-war days, the frivolous, money-mad, "let's be gay" note of this period is strikingly different from the drama born of those distressing conditions caused by the depression.

This recent period is well represented in the numerous plays of social conflict and economic stress which have appeared during the past decade. The plays of the "Leftists", the Union Theatre Groups, and some of those presented by the Federal Theatres show a definite revolt against economic suppression and class distinction. Waiting for Lefty, Stevedore, Peace on Earth, and Awake and Sing are just a few of these militant satirical dramas of this later Contemporary Period which we might well call Recent to distinguish it from the age which followed the war and preceded the crash of the stock markets. As for the term modern I shall use it in the broadest sense so as to include the wide span of years from the birth of the modern drama in the United States up to the present time. In a more specific manner I shall refer to the contemporary period set up by Miss Block, as well as the recent period which I have just mentioned.

Diversified opinions of what drama is, show that it is difficult to determine just what to include in the field of drama and what to exclude. If we were to follow the suggestions of the classicists in the dramatic world we would now find ourselves having to eliminate many of the modern American theatrical productions with definite satiric intent such as Of Thee I Sing and What Price Glory? because they have not the traditional dramatic form and structure, nor a noble message to impart. The old world cannot set the standards of our modern drama. In the Art of the Drama the

co-authors remind us that drama cannot be stabilized.

The relationship between the drama and the theatre is not, to be sure, perfectly easy to define. ...the theatre is a changing form; the playwright is a changing, and, in some instances, an innovating entity. The relationship, then, is that existing between two variables and therefore is constantly in need of being defined and re-defined, for every playwright and for every type of theatrical structure.²

The musical comedy did not originate in our modern theatre. It goes back to the ancient Greek comedies even before tragedy was born. While the function of the ancient chorus differs greatly from that of our contemporary singing, dancing chorus, yet the effect is much the same. The modern chorus resembles the ancient group of performers in that it sets the tone and spirit of the piece. Music was an important element of the ancient drama. Nothing is said to exclude music in any definition of drama. In musical plays like Of Thee I Sing it is the music that is the soothing balm for the satiric sting.

Although What Price Glory? is but a series of episodes, yet it serves the audience with a great story of the true picture and interpretation of the life of the World War soldier in France. If we exclude this work from the field of drama because it does not follow the traditional structure of a play then we shall likewise have to eliminate many other modern episodic theatrical productions such as Lawrence Houseman's Victoria Regina or Robert E. Sherwood's Abe Lincoln in Illinois. Some of the recognized authorities and critics of our American drama such as Eleanor Flexner, Anita Block, Frank Hurburt O'Hara, and Joseph Wood Krutch include these types and some other unusual forms in their recent works on modern and contemporary drama. In this study I make no apology for my selection of plays as far as

² F. B. Millett and G. E. Bentley, p. 6.

their literary merits are concerned. I have been guided in my choice not by form or dramatic structure alone, but rather by an urge to determine the status of satire in all kinds of dramatic work written in the United States since 1880.

Before proceeding to define and discuss satire and its various offshoots it might be well to consider briefly the nature and status of American drama. In her well known historic treatment of the American drama, Margaret Mayorga, a recognized authority on the history of American drama, says:

...the answer to the question, "What is an American drama?" may lie, for the time being, not in the play's comprehension of the American people as a whole, but rather in the continuance over a period of time of its satisfactory interpretation of that segment of the people which it portrays. It may be slang drama and not be appreciated by the "blue-stockings"; it may be intellectual drama and not appreciated by the man on the street; it may be sordid drama and not appreciated by the aesthetes; it may be purposeful drama and not appreciated by the sophisticates. But if a play continues to satisfy over a period of time the group for which it is written, it may safely be counted as representative American drama of the contemporary epoch. In its very diversity the drama of America of today offers opportunities such as no other nation has previously presented.³

The American dramatists have recognized the need for unlimited variety in presenting their interpretation of life to American audiences whose theatrical tastes are as diversified as their ancestral claims.

John Gassner, a well known critic of drama in the United States, begins his preface to Eleanor Flexner's recent work American Playwrights 1918-1938 with confidence that America has at last reached the plane of success in the field of drama. He comments in the following words:

³ A Short History of the American Drama, p. 342.

It is one of the common-places of contemporary criticism that we have been in possession of the best drama in the world since 1918. ...we are comforted by the dramatic output of O'Neill, Anderson, Howard, Behrman, Kaufman, and a host of other playwrights; ...and many of us glow with pride that our stage should have room for all techniques and shades of opinion. Nothing, we say, is too out-spoken or revolutionary for us; where else can one satirize the head of a government as in I'd Rather Be Right or challenge the prevailing social order with the vigor of Waiting for Lefty and The Cradle Will Rock? ...We do not even wonder at our supremacy, but take it as the rightful heritage of our democratic institutions and national energies.⁴

If our American drama is not all that these critics claim it is, yet we do know that it has survived the test of a changing world. The drama of England has been on the decline for the past few years. Since the world has been upset by revolutions, depression and the downfall of nations dramatic production has been at a standstill in Spain, Italy, and Germany. France is not keeping pace with the past and Russia is steeped in the mire of propaganda. Ours is at least the drama of a free people who have the stamina and courage to cry out in criticism and mockery of themselves and the social order of which they are a part. It is a healthful sign and gives promise of preserving our national ideals.

Satire is not exactly a type of literature in the sense that an epic, a lyric, a novel, or a drama is. It is a species of literary composition which has so many closely related branches that it will be well to consider it in its various meanings, even if we cannot set up an accurate definition of it in a general sense. Some authorities consider satire as a process or a method of writing; others as a literary mode or style. The following definitions of the term satire are taken from A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles:

⁴ Pp. vii-viii.

- I. a. A poem, or in modern use sometimes a prose composition in which prevailing vices or follies are held up to ridicule a particular person or class of persons, a lampoon.
- b. A satirical utterance; a speech or saying in ridicule of some person or thing.⁵

William Flint Thrall and Addison Hibbard in their attempt to define satire treat the word as a style of writing. Here is their definition:

Satire: A literary manner which blends a critical attitude with humor and wit to the end that human institutions may be improved. The true satirist is conscious of the frailty of institutions of man's devising and attempts through laughter not so much to tear down as to inspire a remodeling. If the critic simply abuses he is writing invective; if he is personal and splenetic he is writing sarcasm; if he is sad and morose over the state of society he is writing irony or mere gloom.⁶

Criticism and humor is the basic formula of satire. These two elements vary in proportion to each other, and it is in these varying proportions that satire begets many and varied off-spring. When criticism predominates and is vituperative or contemptuous, the result is invective or irony. But when humor or the comic spirit abounds the outcome is usually some form of burlesque. These are two ends of the poles, with the travesty, the lampoon, and the caricature, some of the more important of satirical types, falling in between the two extremities.

Criticism as used in connection with satire is almost always used either constructively or destructively; never in the commendable sense. Occasionally criticism points out or suggests weaknesses without taking definite sides, but rather leaving the decision with the audience as demonstrated in many of the problem plays.

Humor is a necessary element of satire according to the definitions of most authorities. It takes the "lion's share" in satiric drama in America

⁵ Sir James A. H. Murray, Vol. viii p. 119.

⁶ A Handbook to Literature, p. 387.

today. Somehow we don't mind bitter doses of criticism of even ourselves if they are administered with the sugar coatings which produce laughter. American audiences have laughed uproarously at themselves in burlesque productions like Of Thee I Sing. The fact that they recognize the gullibility of a stupid and near sighted electorate of which they are members does not arouse their ire but incites their mirthful feelings. In our American drama we find more of humor than wit. It does not follow, however, that our playwrights are incapable of wit. The comedy of manners which is best adapted to the use of wit is not commonly produced in the United States.

Of the related forms of satire, irony is the most subtle because it hides or disguises itself in misleading phrases. It is defined in the Encyclopaedia Britannica in these words:

Irony, a form of speech in which the real meaning is concealed or contradicted by the words used. (Greek,--) "one who says less than he means. It is particularly employed for the purpose of mockery or contempt. The Greek work was used for an understatement in the nature of dissimulation. It is especially exemplified in the assumed ignorance which Socrates adopted as a method of dialectic, the "Socratic irony" is the device of making a character use words which mean one thing to him and another to those acquainted with the real issue.⁷

Irony is found in much of our present day drama. It is frequently in the ironic vein that Eugene O'Neill uses satire. His satire or irony is usually hidden under the cloak of symbolism. Philip Barry is another dramatist who wields the pen of irony, but with a lighter touch. The plays which embody irony are usually of greater literary value than those which are definitely and whole-heartedly satiric. Dramatic irony even finds its way into tragedy while the more apparent forms of satire are not adopted by this field of drama. Irony is often the vehicle which sustains the interest of the reader or audience both of whom enjoy being taken into the secret

which is disclosed to them.

Invective, another branch of satire, is not very commonly used in our modern American drama. Some of the "left wingers" and the propagandists have been using it in a rather mild manner. It is a type which is widely used in editorial writing in our papers and periodicals. Because of its harsh abusive language it does not often find its way into drama. Theatrical managers do not like to risk any type of play which might result in box office failure. The experimental and labor groups have tried plays, in their own theatres, which have at least a fling of invective. Beyond this field very little of this type of satire is used in drama.

The lampoon is a more personal form of satire than any of the others. It is devised in order to bring contempt or abuse upon an individual. It is much less abusive than invective and is seldom used for malicious ridicule. The most striking example of a lampoon in recent years is found in I'd Rather Be Right. While the form of the piece is a burlesque, the role of the president is lampooned by the jovial and pleasant mannered George M. Cohan in the stage presentation of the play. Even the staunch "New Dealers" did not resent the humorous derision tossed across the footlights at them. The lampoon is like the so-called "funny valentine" in that it assails the character or the appearance of a person. In its heartless abuse it is not unlike invective but it leans more to the side of humor. "It is a virulent satire either in prose or verse; the idea of injustice and unscrupulousness seems to be essential to its definition."⁸ Lampooning in general writing is no longer popular since libel laws have made it a dangerous pastime. It is still used to some extent in drama; especially in the United States where

⁸
Ibid. p. 634.

the freedom of speech clause of the Constitution encourages and fosters criticism. Mr. Kaufman with his various collaborators has produced some of the best lampoons in modern drama. Generally they are of a musical comedy type which alleviates the sting of their harsh ridicule. The personality of President Roosevelt in I'd Rather Be Right is the most daring example of the lampoon in modern drama.

Burlesque drama is characterized by ridiculous exaggeration and distortion. Thrall and Hibbard particularly emphasize the latter characteristic.

...the sublime may be made absurd, honest emotions may be turned to sentimentality, a serious subject may be treated frivolously or a frivolous subject seriously. Perhaps the essential quality which makes for burlesque is the discrepancy between subject-matter and style. That is, a style ordinarily dignified may be used for nonsensical matter, or a style very nonsensical may be used to ridicule a weighty matter.⁹

Burlesque drama is not of modern origin. Aristophanes used it to ridicule contemporary writers, and styles of writing. It has always been a popular form in humorous dramatic writing of a satiric nature. Edward Harrigan in his Mulligan Guard series makes use of this type of satire. Philip Barry gives a more recent treatment of burlesque writing. A burlesque is a kindred form of farce. Mr. Ashley Dukes connects our musical comedy with this satirical type of literature. He says:

Burlesque is the natural parent of what is now called musical comedy, and also of the revue, which has been borrowed from France and happily acclimated in English speaking countries. The light operas of Gilbert and Sullivan are first rate examples of burlesque. ...In a great measure the art of the music hall or vaudeville is an art of burlesque.¹⁰

⁹Op. Cit. p. 63.

¹⁰Drama, p. 49.

Caricature and burlesque are closely related forms of writing in that both are characterized by exaggeration. In A Handbook to Literature caricature is defined in the following words:

Descriptive writing which seizes upon certain individual qualities of a person and through exaggeration or distortion produces a burlesque, ridiculous effect. Caricature is more frequently associated with drawing (cartoons) than with writing, since for writing the related types--satire, burlesque, and parody--are more generally used. Caricature, unlike the highest satire, is likely to treat personal qualities, though, like satire, it lends itself to the ridicule of political, religious, and social foibles.¹¹

In Dulcy, George S. Kaufman and Marc Connelly have presented a perfect caricature of a bungling and inane woman. Clare Boothe's The Women is another example of caricature. This a biting but laughable cartoon not of an individual but of a group. Miss Boothe's amusing dialogue compensates to some extent for her gross exaggerations.

Character satires such as George Kelly's Craig's Wife and The Show-Off are sometimes apt to be confused with caricatures. These two plays of Mr. Kelly's are studies of definite individuals who are not in any way exaggerated, but repugnant to the playwright who treats them satirically.

Closely akin to the burlesque is the travesty. Don Quixote is one of the finest examples of this type of writing. It is related to the burlesque because it, too, is characterized by incongruity or absurdity. The travesty is more limited in that it treats serious subjects in a frivolous manner. In this respect it is the opposite of the mock epic which portrays serious treatment of trivial subject matter. Rachel Crothers in Expressing Willie travesties the popularity of psychology and the craze for self-expression.

¹¹Op. Cit. p. 67.

Pasquinades are often linked with lampoons, yet they are more abusive and less humorous. Often they are coarse and vulgar though these are not necessary elements. The Encyclopaedia Americana gives an interesting account of the origin of the pasquinade.

Pasquino or Pasquinade, a lampoon or short publication, deriving its name from Pasquino, a tailor who lived in Rome in the 15th century. He was celebrated for his wit and satire. After his death a mutilated or broken statue was resurrected and placed near his shop, and on this were posted all satires, rhymes, libels, etc., hence the name pasquin or pasquinade. The Roman populace made use of these satires to express themselves in a manner that was prohibited by laws against the freedom of speech.¹²

Gods of Lightning by Maxwell Anderson and Harold Hickerson as well as Merry-Go-Round by Albert Maltz and George Sklar are examples of the pasquinade in modern drama. Amid their biting ridicule there is a blending of warm indignation as is apparent in many of the modern plays of social criticism.

Satiric types are many but those which have been explained in the preceding pages are the most common in present day dramatic writings. The satiric dramatist of modern times seldom uses the romantic, the tragic or even the melodramatic types of writing to carry out his purpose. His choice is usually one of the various types of comedy. When he soars higher than the humorous and his keynote is ironical then he may resort to the irregular forms of dramatic writing, such as the symbolical, the expressionistic or allegorical play. The naturalistic fantasy of a type like Gerhart Hauptman's Hannele often-times bears ironic significance. It is our own Eugene O'Neill who strikes the mallet of ironic force in the unconventional dramatic forms like The Hairy Ape or the Emperor Jones.

¹²

Vol. XXI, p. 367.

Joseph Hall, the self-styled "first English satirist" showed occasionally that one of the purposes of satire is to act as a wholesome corrective. In his Satire III Book V. he consciously presents the serious and ethical purpose of satire.

The satire should be like the porcupine,
That shoots sharp quills out in each angry line,
And wounds the blushing cheeks and fiery eye,
Of him that hears, and readeth guiltily.¹³

Frances Russell believes that the service of satire is exemplary and should accrue untold benefits. She says:

To raise a laugh at vice...is not the legitimate office of Satire, which is to hold up the vicious as objects of reprobation and scorn, for the example of others who may be deterred by their sufferings.¹⁴

It is likewise her belief that the legitimate object of satire is not to humble an individual but to improve the species. This form of criticism thus becomes didactic and moral in scope.

H. J. Massingham, an English writer and critic, believes that the office of the satirist is "To exhibit things not as they are but as they should not be (and so should be) is the aim of the satirist."¹⁵ The writings of the satirist are often a direct result of prejudices, jealousy, or a desire to disseminate his beliefs as exhibited in the problem and propaganda plays. These of course are dramas written or presented to arouse the emotions so as to bring about action. The political satires especially belong to this classification.

¹³ Satires, And Other Poems, p. 103.

¹⁴ Satire in the Victorian Novel, p. 14.

¹⁵ Letters to X, Satire III, p. 23.

The early satirists were generally not humanitarians. Often they expressed malicious ridicule or peevish scolding instead of justified scorn for wrong doing. Too often they expressed themselves on mere tempermental prejudices. Father Calvert Alexander, S. J. believes that the satirist offers destructive criticism but not constructive. His words follow:

The professional satirist is notoriously weak at building. His proper function is wrecking the business of blasting antique social super-structures, of leveling formalized opinions, of clearing the ground of intellectual rubbish of centuries so that a new order may begin.¹⁶

The satirist in a strict sense is obsolete today. He has been replaced by the writer with but a deft satiric touch. The best satire comes from the pens of those who take their task not too seriously and with the least possible ceremony.

In the following chapter we shall try to get a general perspective of the history of American satirical writings which have been prepared for the theatre in the United States before studying the plays themselves. We may linger over a few of the most representative plays which appeared before the modern era began in the United States in order that we can better understand how the foundation was laid for modern satiric drama. Less discussion will be given to the twentieth century because we shall view that period more closely when we study the plays under their various categories. Then our task will be to interpret the role of satire in the plays, to determine the purposes and to seek possible results of their satiric thrusts.

¹⁶ The Catholic Literary Revival, p. 296.

THE NATURE AND CIRCUMSTANCES
OF SATIRE
IN THE AMERICAN THEATRE

CHAPTER I

From immemorial time the satiric mood has persisted in the minds of men. Because of prevailing conditions it has fluctuated through the ages; rising to great heights in one period, and falling to a low level in another. Satirical whips have lashed the flesh of reprobates and rulers, of the guileless and the clergy, yet their strokes have never been silenced. The satirist may change his form or style of writing but never his attitude toward the follies and foibles of mankind. The first definite satiric elements in drama began in ancient Greece and Aristophanes was the foremost exponent of satirical dramatic writing. The satire of the Greek comedies is more biting and outspoken than is the satire of our modern American drama. Aristophanes knew no bounds in his use of invective because freedom of speech in Athens was so encouraged that satiric slings were hurled at public officials in the theatres which had been financed by city-state funds.

Roman comedy was fashioned after the Grecian models, yet it had less of the caustic bitterness of Aristophanes' personal satires and travesties. The Latin comedies of Plautus and Terence lacked the fire and daring of the Greek plays from which they were adapted. The content of the Roman plays was less critical and more conventional in the treatment of prosaic subjects and stock characters, the shrewish wife, the panderer, the parasite and proud boastful beings.¹ The Roman comedy was a more neighborly type than the Old Greek Comedy of Aristophanes, but much less satiric.

¹ H. J. Massingham, Letters to X, p. 91.

However influential these classical satirists may have been in influencing our modern writers, yet we cannot say that our modern drama issued directly from the Romans and Greeks. There was a definite breach between classical drama and that produced in the Middle Ages. The will of the conquering barbarian hordes, and the church which suppressed the theatre as an influence detrimental to spiritual life were the responsible forces. Raymond M. Alden gives us an interesting account of the objects of satire in the Middle Ages.

Mediaeval satire was a thoroughly informal kind. It arose not from classical traditions, but from contemporary life. It usually took the form of either invective or burlesque. It was the comment or remonstrance of the witty scholar or indignant Christian, in the face of the inconsistencies, oppression, and small knaveries that he saw all about him.²

Religious drama in the early Christian era was usually serious, yet it did not lack the boisterous and humorous spirit which disguised its didactic purposes and attracted large audiences. Often the satirical shafts were sent out in other hidden forms such as the allegory, fabliau and beast epic. A more truly amusing and yet religious form of dramatic entertainment was the interlude, which minimized the serious side and stressed rollicking humor. It was a jester, in the court of Queen Mary, who was the best known of writers of these satiric interludes. His best known work of this type is The Four P's, a lively burlesque on the abuses of the church and characters within. The apparent exaggeration of this piece seems to go beyond the limits of burlesque but evidently John Heywood knew how susceptible the common folk of his day were to the fraudulent offers of pardoners and peddlers.

²
The Rise of Formal Satire in England, p. 4.

Political satire was not unpopular but very forceful in the Middle Ages as well as in all other ages in the history of mankind. The oppressed subjects of tyrannical kings offered protestations in various satirical forms. Courtiers and judges were likewise slashed by the swords of an incensed public. The central idea of mediaeval satire was resentment of injustice and disapproval of the actions of the wicked.

The Elizabethan comedy was written for the same audiences as the tragedies were and so we should expect a more highly developed drama in this period. The reign of Elizabeth gave rise to formal satire. The follies and fads, the foibles and vices of every-day life in London were emphasized, as they were in the classical comedies of Aristophanes' day and are still stressed even today in the realistic plays of our satiric dramatist, Rachel Crothers. Elizabethan comedy has been described in The Art of the Drama as "a comedy of tricks and frauds, in which some one was always being relieved of his money or his wife."³ The most popular dramatist of this type of comedy in the Elizabethan Period of English literature is Ben Jonson. It is to his plays, or to those of some of his contemporaries like Middleton, Chapman, and Brome that we should turn if we are to understand the background of every day life of Elizabethan London. They are full of significant allusions and satiric implications regarding the life of those days.

The comedy of Molière is a chapter in itself. In fact some critics believe that he headed the list of modern dramatists. Although his works belong to the classical drama of France and the world, yet they did bear many modern marks. In his Les Precieuses Ridicules written in 1659 he satirizes preciosity. This was the first of his social satires and we still find this

³ F. B. Millett and G. E. Bentley, pp. 96-97.

form of ridicule used in our modern American drama. Miss Crothers may have been influenced somewhat by Moliere in her Expressing Willie. The world-wide interest in Molière's plays is no doubt due to their intellectual appeal which provokes "thoughtful laughter" rather than emotional hilarity.

In the Restoration comedy, satire reached a high peak due to the popularity of the comedy of manners, an exclusive type of play which appealed to the aristocratic class. It has had revivals in modern English comedy but has seldom been popular in the United States for quite obvious reasons. However, some of our recent playwrights have attempted the brilliance of wit minus the elegant manners in plays like Miss Hellman's The Little Foxes.

The eighteenth century was not productive in satirical drama. Although Sheridan and Goldsmith come to our minds in their most popular classics, The School for Scandal, The Rivals, and She Stoops to Conquer, yet they are too similar to the comedy of manners of the preceding period to class them as typical of eighteenth century plays which were sentimental and less satiric.

Satirical strains in the drama had reached a low ebb in the 18th century drama and awaited the coming of the great Ibsen to start the spark of criticism against social injustices and the stupid conventions of society which have enslaved man through the past ages. Henrik Ibsen is considered by most critics the father of modern international drama. His daring dramatic rebukes flamed into satirical significance in the works of Gerhart Hauptman in Germany, and George Bernard Shaw in England, the two outstanding followers of the great Norwegian playwright.

Although Ibsen may not have been a satirist in the strict sense, his plays lacking the necessary element of humor, yet he has inspired many of our contemporary playwrights into flights of satiric scorn. O'Neill has

always been a fond admirer of the old Scandinavian socialist. George Bernard Shaw, one of the most outstanding satirists of modern times in all the glory of his egoism, bluntly admits his admiration for Ibsen as well as unmeasurable debt to him. Shaw is of course more definitely the satirist with his inherited Celtic humor blended into keen satiric analysis.

The early history of the theatre in America is bound up with that of foreign countries like France and Germany; but particularly with England because of the influence of the mother tongue. Mr. Arthur Hornblow, a noted authority on the history of American drama, says: "That so little should be known of the early beginnings of the acted drama in America is not surprising when one considers the intolerance of the age against the theatre and the player."⁴ The chief obstacle in the way of the establishment of a theatre in early colonial days was the revolt of the prevailing religious groups like the Puritans in New England, the Huguenots in New York and the Quakers in Philadelphia. Strange enough it was that the first theatricals were nourished and fostered by two other religious bodies, the Episcopalians in Virginia and the Catholics in Maryland. It was not until the colonists had decided to consolidate their interests and form a permanent union that anything like a native drama took form. The importation of English plays and even players was common in Colonial days. Adaptations of foreign dramas, especially the French versions, held the stage until well into the eighties of the nineteenth century when our native drama was beginning to thrive. Arthur Hobson Quinn says: "It is the nature of the play and the circumstances

⁴ A History of the Theatre in America, Vol. I, p. 23.

of its production that determine the nationality of drama and not the accident of birth."⁵

It was in New York City, the great Mecca of theatrical production in the United States, that the first play was acted upon this continent according to A. Hornblow's historical records. "The first play presented in New York of which we have actual record was George Farquhar's comedy The Recruiting Officer. This the earliest play known to have been acted in North America by professional players, was seen, at what was described the 'New' Theatre on December 6, 1732."⁶ Its satirical elements were not emphasized but it is important in the study of American drama because it links our early theatre with England by showing that the roots of our American drama were carried over in the soil of a forsaken fatherland. In the early days of settlement plays were presented chiefly to amuse and relieve the strain of sacrifice. Therefore the satiric spirit did not assert itself in the first years of adjustment in a "foreign land".

It was during our Revolutionary War period that satirical plays appeared to any great extent although some satire was written before the war. These plays were chiefly closet dramas and were not American. "The Paxton Boys, a satiric drama translated from the French,"⁷ according to Arthur Hobson Quinn's account, is a typical example. Mrs. Mercy Otis Warren had such first hand information on the subject of the war that her plays, though not important from the standpoint of dramatic literary models, are

⁵ A History of the American Drama, Vol. I, Preface p. xii.

⁶ Op. Cit., p. 41.

⁷ Op. Cit., p. 28.

of definite historic value. Her first satire The Adulateur was a direct indictment of the traitor, Thomas Hutchinson, who held at one time three offices of member of the council and betrayed to the British the secrets of his responsibilities of office. Her best known and most successful satire is The Group which deals with the abrogation of the charter of Massachusetts. Her satires are a sincere, and bitter reaction against traitors and Tories; an answer to the opponents of American freedom who likewise attempted to preach their own cause in dramatic invective. If these satiric works cannot be preserved as literary treasure they should be guarded well for their social significance.

The satires of the revolutionary period were profusive; tragedies as well as comedies, but after the war the satiric slant, as might be expected, dwindled when men were at peace with each other. The comedy became the most popular form of dramatic writing because it was better suited to the spirit of a relaxed and triumphant populace. The first native comedy to be produced by a professional company appeared in 1787. It was The Contrast which marked a new era in the American theatre. Royall Tyler fashioned this play after The School for Scandal but he gave it a definite American scene and characters. It was not a work of genius nor was it original in its treatment of the affectation of manner but at least this first comedy of American manners was typically native. Mr. George C. Odell says "The Contrast is a very 'talky' play almost devoid of connected action until the last act. It has much greater importance, however, in the fact that it first introduced, in the character of Jonathan, the thenceforth traditional stage Yankee."⁸ Although the Revolutionary satires struck a note of contrast be-

⁸ Annals of the New York Stage, Vol. I. p. 256.

tween the affectation of British manners and sturdier sincerity of native conduct, yet in them it was not the dominant note as it is in The Contrast.

In the very beginning of the play Tyler satirizes two frivolous young girls of the period. The scene is in the apartment of Charlotte, one of them. Their conversation might serve as an awakening to the older generation of today who constantly remind the younger set that they are heading toward destruction and that they are not like the young people of grandmother's day.

Charlotte. It would have delighted you to have seen me the last evening, my charming girl! I was dangling o'er the battery with Billy Dimple; a knot of young fellows were upon the platform; as I passed them I faltered with one of the most bewitching false steps you ever saw, and then recovered myself with such a pretty confusion, flirting my hoop to discover a jet black shoe and brilliant buckle. Gad! how my little heart thrilled to hear the confused raptures of--"Demme, Jack, what a delicate foot!" "Ha! General, what a well-turned--"

Letitia.

Fie! Fie! Charlotte, (stopping her mouth) I protest you are quite a libertine.

Charlotte. Why, my dear little prude, are we not all such libertines? Do you think, when I sat tortured two hours under the hands of my friseur, and an hour more at my toilet, that I had any thoughts of my aunt Susan, or my cousin Betsey? though they are both allowed to be critical judges of dress.

Letitia. Why, who should we dress to please, but those who are judges of its merit?

Charlotte. Why a creature who does not know Buffon from Souflee--Man!--My Letitia--Man! for whom we dress, walk, dance, talk, lisp, languish, and smile. Does not the grave Spectator assure us, that even our much bepraised diffidence, modesty, and blushes, are all directed to make ourselves good wives and mothers as fast as we can. Why, I'll undertake with one flirt of this hoop to bring more beaux to my feet in one week than the grave Maria, and her sentimental circle can do, by singing sentiment till their hairs are grey.⁹

⁹ Arthur H. Quinn, Representative American Plays, Act I, Scene i, p. 51.

Such an open confession on the part of Charlotte cannot but make us think that Clare Boothe was not so purely original in her recent daring picture of The Women. It is possible she was inspired with giving a scene in which men have been excluded by this 18th century model. While the occasions and external objects differ yet the satiric purpose is similar in both these plays. The only difference is that the earlier one is written by a satirical misogynist looking in from the outside and the later one written within woman's domain by a woman who rebukes a certain despicable group of women whom she has known personally through her wide acquaintance-ship of human beings.

The Yankee character of Jonathan is not unlike many of our humorous character portrayals in modern drama. The following conversation is not only a caricature of the Yankee but it gives us an excellent picture of the theatre of Tyler's day. Jenny addresses Jonathan.

Jenny. So, Mr. Jonathan, I hear you were at the play last night.

Jonathan. I at the play-house! --why didn't I see the play then?

Jenny. Why the people you saw were the players.

Jonathan. Mercy on my soul! did I see the wicked players? Mayhap that 'ere Darby that I liked so, was the old serpent himself, and his cloven foot in his pocket. Why I vow, now I come to think on't, the candles seemed to burn blue, and I am sure where I sat it smelt tarnally of brimstone.

Jessamy. Well, Mr. Jonathan, from your account, which I confess is very accurate, you must have been at the play-house.

Jonathan. Why, I vow I began to smell a rat. When I came away, I went to the man for my money again: you want your money, says he; why says I, no man shall jockey me out of my money; I paid my money to see sights, and the dogs a bit of a sight have I seen, unless you call listening to people's private business a sight. Why, says he, it is the School for Scandalization --The School for Scandalization!--Oh, ho! no wonder you New York folks are so cute at it, when you go to school to learn it: and so I jogged off.¹⁰

¹⁰ Ibid., Act III, Scene i, p. 65.

Jonathan is an important role in this post-Revolutionary War period because he marks the beginning of the sectional or national character types that were ridiculed on the stage such as the man from Arizona, the southern Negro, the Irish, the Dutch, the Jew, and other "Way down East Yankees". Besides the satirical thrust at the Yankee in The Contrast, Tyler plays prudish Puritanism in its continuous and prejudiced fight against the innocent past-time of attending a play-house.

Jonathan's visit to the theatre has more than satiric significance. It marks the definite establishment of the theatre and the end of prolonged power in the fight against theatrical productions which was so apparent during the revolutionary period as well as in colonial days. Opposition was never again strong enough to prevent theatrical performances after the successful showing of The Contrast.

Following the rehabilitation period after the war the social satires not distantly related to the Yankee plays began to increase in popularity. These plays were of the comedy of manners mode fashioned after The Contrast and English models of the same type. They satirized fashionable society chiefly and continued to appear until after the Civil War. William Dunlap, whom Margaret Mayorga calls "Father of the American Theatre,"¹¹ is not only distinguished for giving the people what they want in the theatre but for establishing the social satire after he was favorably impressed with Royall Tyler's plays. The early social satires were predominantly humorous on the surface but in reality they were deeply meaningful thrusts at the shams of society. Social satires have been popular ever since the first successful showing of The Contrast in 1787. Other types have for a short period over-

¹¹ A Short History of the American Drama, p. 51.

shadowed them but they are like faithful perennials which return in ever recurring cycles. The subject matter of social satires is too close to human nature and human conduct ever to be lost to drama.

Many of the plays such as those written by James Nelson Barker and William Dunlap were derived from The Contrast and served as connecting links between their early ancestor and Fashion, one of the greatest social satires of the pre-Civil War period. Arthur Hobson Quinn says "...the impulse to satirize so-called fashionable society seems to have been present more frequently than is generally supposed."¹² Few of these early satires have had more than temporary success but they are significant even though short-lived because they helped keep alive the spirit of satire on our stage; a healthful and necessary spirit which the theatre can never entirely subdue.

Fashion, which deals with the "nouveaux riches" is a direct thrust at that certain class of Americans who ape French manners and modes of living. The stigma of foreign influence was hard to eradicate from the pens of our early playwrights. Foreign dramas affected not only the American stage of the early nineteenth century but the modes of living in the United States. National motives in foreign themes persisted in our drama until even after the middle of the century. While England, Germany, and France contributed ideas and plots to our American playwrights it was France chiefly who became the model for the social customs of the so-called upper class.

Mrs. Mowatt's drama is the best example of this type produced during the first half of the century. It is an excellent example of character study treated satirically. No doubt it served as an inspiration to such recent dramatists as George Kelly and Sidney Howard in some of the character stu-

¹² Op. Cit., Vol. I, p. 309.

dies of their recent dramas. Mr. Quinn's praise for the play is an interesting note.

Fashion deserved its success. It is that rare thing, a social satire based on real knowledge of the life it depicts, but painting it without bitterness, without nastiness, and without affectation. It is true to the matters of the time and place, but is based on human motives and failings that are universal, and when it is placed on the stage today it is as fresh as when it delighted the audiences of the Park Theatre in 1845. The plot of Fashion is not important. It is the drawing of character that gives it a right to live.¹³

And it has lived. When a play which was produced in 1845 can be successfully revived after seventy years it undoubtedly has claims of value. Mr. Quinn refers to several revivals of the play in a footnote from the book previously quoted.

The first Act was played at the matinee performance given by the New York Drama League at the Republic Theatre, January 22, 1917, which presented a series of scenes from historic American plays. When the curtain went down, audible requests were heard that Fashion be allowed to go on and that the rest of the program be left out. The play was revived entire by the University of Chicago Dramatic Club in February, 1918, and the Zelosophic Society of the University of Pennsylvania May 19, 1919. The possibilities of the play were quite evident.¹⁴

The fact that London applauded it for three weeks when it was presented at the Royal Olympic Theatre in 1850 is proof enough of its merits. In a more recent revival of the play in 1924 it was successfully staged in two hundred thirty-five performances in New York City, moving from one theatre to another, according to a footnote found in Quinn's Representative American Plays.¹⁵

Since the playwright, Mrs. Mowatt, was born in Bordeaux, France, she learned French as her native language. Later when she came to America she mingled with the social set of New York City. She was well qualified to

¹³
Ibid. p. 312.

¹⁴
Ibid.

¹⁵
p. 280.

write satirically upon a subject which she knew so well from personal observation and experience. Fashion is a form of burlesque on that despicable group of gullible, stupid, and pretentious social climbers in the United States who unsuccessfully tried to ape the behavior and customs of foreign society. In its various characters we find other fads and foibles satirized.

Mrs. Tiffany, the wife of the suddenly successful business man is obviously the character which sets the satiric tone of the piece. She represents the shams of the social few as observed by the more stable, practical, and keen-eyed American of the less "elite" group. A few lines taken from the play will quickly classify her role and portray the purpose of the play. Mrs. Tiffany's confidence in her French maid, who is only a little more informed than her incompetent employer, presents a ludicrous picture of gullibility versus deception.

Mrs. Tiffany. This mode of receiving visitors only upon one specified day of the week is a most convenient custom! It saves the trouble of keeping the house continually in order and of being always dressed. I flatter myself that I was the first to introduce it amongst the New York ee-light. You are quite sure that it is strictly a Parisian mode, Milinette?

Milinette. Oh, oui, Madame; entirely mode de Paris.

Mrs. Tiffany. This girl is worth her weight in gold. (aside) Milinette, how do you say arm-chair in French?

Milinette. Fauteuil, Madame.

Mrs. Tiffany. Fo-tool! That has a foreign--an out-of-the-wayish sound that is perfectly charming--and so genteel! There is something about our American words decidedly vulgar. Fowtool! how refined. Fowtool! Armchair! what a difference!

Milinette. Madame have one charmante pronunciation. Fowtool! (mimicking aside.) Charmante, Madame!

Mrs. Tiffany. Do you think so, Milinette? Well, I believe I have. But a woman of refinement and of fashion can always accomodate herself to everything foreign! And a week's study of that invaluable work--"French without a Master," has made me quite at home in the court language of Europe!¹⁶

The frequent asides and stage directions with satirical significance as well as the obvious satire throughout, definitely date the play in comparison with the more subtle implications and infrequent stage directions of our contemporary plays. The Count satirizes that class of fortune-hunting-foreigners who come to America to impose their vacuous personalities upon the gullible, get-rich-quick merchants who have daughters seeking titled husbands.

Mrs. Tiffany. Count, I am so much ashamed,--pray excuse me! Although a lady of large fortune, and one, Count, who can boast of the highest connections, I blush to confess that I have never travelled,--while you, Count, I presume are at home in all the courts of Europe.

Count. Courts? Eh? Oh, yes, Madam, very true. I believe I am pretty well known in some of the courts of Europe--po-lice courts (Aside, crossing.) In a word, Madam, I had seen enough of civilized life--wanted to refresh myself by a sight of barbarous countries and customs--had my choice between the Sandwich Islands and New York--chose New York.¹⁷

Mrs. Tiffany's dependence upon her maid, Milinette, for guidance in the prevailing fashions of France is brought out in the conversation between Milinette and the newly arrived servant, Zeke, who desires to know something about the family and what is expected of him, as well as the nature of Milinette's services. She proudly informs him of her exalted position. "I am Madame's femme de chambre--her lady's maid, Monsieur Zeke. I teach Madame les modes de Paris, and Madame set de fashion for all New York. You

¹⁶ Allan G. Halline, American Plays, Act I, Scene i, p. 242.

¹⁷ Ibid., Act I, Scene i, pp. 245-246.

see, Monsieur Zeke, dat it is me, moi-meme dat do lead de fashion for all de American beau monde.¹⁸

Although Fashion does not belong to the modern period, yet it is in many respects as much in vogue today as those social satires which came as a result of it fifty years later. It is very important as a basic study for our more modern satirical dramas. Just as we see resemblances to The School for Scandal in this amusing satire and in The Contrast of an earlier period, so too, will these plays be reflected in the modern plays which are to follow.

Resentment of foreign influence was apparent in the drama long after the showing of Fashion. One of the most ardent preachers of nationalism was James Kirke Paulding who centered his attacks upon England because he was reared on tales reeking with the atrocities of the Tories and the injustices of the English officers. Although he may not be classed as a great dramatist, his name cannot be omitted in a survey of satirical American dramas because of the significance of his play, The Bucktails; or, Americans in England. While nationalism is the predominant echo of the piece yet it is not on this issue alone that the play proves to be interesting today. Regardless of the fact that Paulding's hatred of the English is manifested almost to the extent of invective, yet the human qualities are so strong that it retains a permanent place in our drama. Mr. Allan Gates Halline says in his introduction to this play that the universality of the drama is as apparent as it is in the playwright's great prose satire The Merry Tales of the Three Wise Men of Gotham. The setting or locality of both these works

¹⁸ Ibid., Act I, Scene i, p. 241.

might be changed and still the universal message would be retained. The reason for this Mr. Halline gives in these words:

The striking aspect of The Bucktails, however, is that its satire reaches beyond nationalism to types of character found in any civilized country; though these characters happen to be English in the play, they are satirized for their personal qualities, not for their national idiosyncrasies. It is here that Paulding's commentary strikes the note of universality. This may be tested by noting that today, when relations with England are amicable, there is less appeal in the nationalistic theme than in the caricature of the individuals.¹⁹

This comment is true concerning the present day appeal of the play but if we go back to the post-Revolutionary War period we can readily recognize the striking satiric indictment of the English when the feeling against Great Britain was rampant. The Bucktails was written shortly after the War of 1812 but seems not to have been acted according to Mr. Quinn's account in his History of the American Drama From the Beginning to the Civil War.²⁰

The play abounds in satire. From the very beginning the critical note is sounded in the title which satirizes the stupidity of the Englishman in his consideration of the Americans as primitives. The Englishman's description of the Americans as savages is amusing when one considers that they are but one or two generations removed from their former countrymen. The conversation between Obsolete, who is obsessed with love for everything ancient, and his sister who is satirized as an over-zealous humanitarian and reformer, seems perhaps in modern times to be a bit far-fetched but it must have been very amusing when it was written. The Antiquarian has just informed his sister that he intends to invite to dinner two youngsters from America who

¹⁹Ibid., p. 79.

²⁰Op. Cit., p. 319.

brought a letter of introduction from a cousin of hers. The lines of the play may be found in Halline's American Plays.

Miss Obsolete. Lord, brother, what shall we do with these aborigines? I have been assured that they wear copper rings in their noses--eat raw meat--paint one-half their faces red and the other black--and are positively half naked. I hope you're only in jest about the dinner.

Obsolete. Not I, indeed, marry, I never joke--I can't find that the antediluvians were given to jesting, and therefore hold it as a modern abomination. But suppose they do wear copper rings in their noses, we'll set that off against those in your ears. --Touching raw meat, our rare roast beef will serve instead; as to painting that is all the rage among our most fashionable young men--and the fine ladies will keep their nakedness in countenance.²¹

The apparently unsuccessful internationalist, Mrs. Carlton, warns her sister, Jane, against forsaking the land of her birth. Paulding's views upon this subject seem to coincide with those of Henry James, who, despite the fact that he spent the greater part of his life in England, constantly repeats this message in his fiction.

Jane. ...I shall never marry out of my own dear country.

Mrs. Carlton. You are right, Jane. Women and especially American women, should never marry to go abroad, or go abroad to be married. In this country the distinctions in society rest upon other foundations than those of mere education, morals, or manners. Rank and title everywhere take precedence, ---Take my word for it, Jane; though chance, or caprice, or novelty, may give a momentary eclat to one of our strolling countrywomen, they will only find solid respectability among the friends of their youth in the land of their birth.²²

The Bucktails is closely related to The Contrast and Fashion in the

²¹ Op. Cit., Act I, Scene ii, p. 86.

²² Ibid., Act I, Scene i, pp. 84-85.

message it conveys of nationalistic feeling against foreign culture. In the treatment of the American men, Henry and Frank, it strikes the sentimental note which was so prevalent in the plays of the nineties and the first decade of the twentieth century. These three plays are the most representative of the numerous social satires which appeared before the Civil War. They are important because they have been models for many satirical social plays of later years. A number of the early satires which did not even reach the stage became extinct from their lack of artistry, their sheer provincialism, or their lack of a universal message. There are few periods in our dramatic history in which social satires have not appeared.

Religious satire has never held a prominent place in the literature of our country and especially in the field of drama for very obvious reasons. There is one important drama of this type, however, which deals with the Puritan persecution of witches and the nonconforming sects. It is Superstition which was written by James Nelson Barker and first presented in 1824. The setting and incidents of the play date back to the latter part of the 17th century. According to the Author's Note, which appears just above the *Dramatis Personae*, the play is based on actual happenings in the days when victims of Puritanical persecution were actually terrorized. "The principal incidents of the following humble attempt at a Domestic Tragedy, are said to have actually occurred in New England in the latter part of the 17th century. If objections be made to the catastrophe as improbable, the best answer is, that such an event is found recorded in the authentic history of that dark period."²³

²³A. G. Halline, American Plays, Superstition, p. 124.

Since the play was written long after the events occurred, the main satiric sting is not so sharp as it might have been if written earlier. But there are other flings at royalty, the court, the Calvinistic philosophy of Divine wrath and punishment for sin and the filial obedience of Puritan families which bordered upon slavery. A few lines from the play may be suggestive. Ravensworth, around whom all the plot revolves, is a cleric steeped in superstition. Walford who sees the folly of such belief attempts to mollify Ravensworth by making an appeal to his intelligence. His efforts are futile.

Walford.

Ah, my friend,
If reason in a mind like yours so form'd,
So fortified by knowledge, can bow down
Before the popular breath, what shall protect
From the all-with'ring blasts of superstition
The unthinking crowd, in whom credulity,
Is ever the first born of ignorance?

Ravensworth. Walford, what meanest thou by superstition!
Is there in our religion aught forbidding
Belief in sorcery! Look through this land,
Or turn thine eyes abroad--are not the men
Most eminent for piety and knowledge--
The shining lights of benighted age,
Are they not, too, believers?²⁴

The struggle between the political parties also gave rise to some satirical productions. Two of these are typical of their kind. The first one, Whigs and Democrats, or Love of No Politics was printed anonymously in 1839 and played in 1844 in Philadelphia. According to Arthur Hobson Quinn:

It is a clever satire on the methods by which an election was carried on in a rural district in Virginia. The author wrote the play according to the preface, "to hold up to ridicule the despicable arts of demagogism" then practiced in the country, and he illustrates forcibly the persistence of political institutions in the scene in which "Major" Roundtree, the local boss, sways the votes of his followers by methods which reveal the survival of the feudal system in our democracy.²⁵

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²⁵Ibid., Act IV, Scene 1, pp. 140-141.

Op. Cit., p. 284.

The other play, The Politicians, was written by Cornelius Mathews in 1840. The setting for this play is New York City and the contested office is that of alderman. The criticism is flung against the disturbed condition in politics in the middle of the nineteenth century. These plays do not merit artistic honor but are the most representative of that distressful period when the political situation in the country offered splendid dramatic scenes for the playwright. It was a period, not much unlike our own today, when the Democratic party who long held power was fighting the Whig party defenders of bank and tariff policies.

The War with Mexico gave impetus to the writing of some plays none of which survived. Then again came another thrust at religion in the Mormon plays which followed. The Mormons, or Life in Salt Lake City written by Thomas Dunn English was played in 1858. It combined religion and politics. A runaway alderman from New York attempts to instruct Brigham Young and his followers in the latest methods of political manipulation but he finds himself much less informed than his students. The satirical names such as Kneeland Whine add humor to the piece and point to that kind of humor which Charles Hoyt and Clyde Fitch often employed in later years.

The American comedy types from 1825 to 1860 offered more satirical thrusts than most other kinds of plays which had been so popular at various intervals during these years. The fireman, Yankee and city plays were the most humorous of these comedy types. The city plays generally dealt with contrasts of types, the yokel as opposed to the "dandy", or the trustworthy and unsuspecting country character being cheated by the cunning city crooks. The fireman vogue was often combined with the city play. A Glance at New York or Fireman on Duty, written in 1848 by Benjamin Baker is one of the

best examples of this type of play. The burlesque scenes of the firemen flashing across the footlights in their fiery red shirts and stiff hats as they drag hose behind them were as successfully done as the Yankee plays. The characters of the fireman satirized that well known institution of volunteer fireman. Their crude methods of extinguishing the flames were not only comically satirical but they rang with biting pathos in the scenes where victims of fires burned to death while the "Bowery B'hoys" carried on their preparatory antics. The "country cousin", too, received his share of ridicule in the role of the victimized visitor who was at the mercy of confidence men of the big city. Benjamin Baker's play marked the beginning of the city plays. Many followed immediately after its first successful showing. It was a forerunner to later plays like The City which was written by Clyde Fitch in 1910 and to Maurine Watkins' Chicago of 1927. It is in the city plays that social satire again appears.

The city plays are so often combined with other kinds of satire such as those dealing with business and politics that it is difficult to classify them definitely. Often they are farcical satires on the parvenu who, being outside the pale of society, endeavor to admit themselves with their mercenary assets. One such farce is Young New York written by E. G. P. Wilkins in 1856. Here again the satirical implication appears in the names of various characters. Mrs. Ten Per Cent tries to marry her daughter to Mr. Needham Crawl but the young lady is more interested in Signor Skibberini. In her preference we see the foreign influence manifested again. Sometimes the role of hunter is reversed as in the case of a bona fide English peer who is willing to "stoop" to the level of democracy in his desire to marry an American girl. This theme is presented in Nature's Nobleman or The Ship Carpenter

of New York which appeared in 1850.

The stage Irishman had received considerable attention on the American stage, especially in New York. Only a few of the plays in which the Irishman was caricatured were written by native Americans. Most of these caricatures were highly exaggerated until the talented Irish-American Fitz James O'Brien, who gave his life on the battle field during the Civil War, presented a more truthful type of Irishman. The most common character sketch of the Celt was drawn from "a British stage tradition in choosing the bizarre features of Irish life, the gentleman in trouble for debt, the servant, or the emigrant, ..." ²⁶ The chief exponents of the Irish plays of this period were John Brougham and Dion Boucicault who was an inspiration to Edward Harrigan in his Mulligan Guard series of a decade or so later.

Another stage type of character was the Negro. Most of these caricatures had their counterpart in Zeke who was previously presented in Fashion. Sometimes the Negro was a pathetic character study ironically treated as featured in Uncle Tom's Cabin, the stage version of Harriet Beecher Stowe's famous Civil War novel. The story was dramatized by G. L. Aiken in 1852. It was the role of the loving and trustworthy Uncle Tom which changed the picture of the Negro from the stupid savage of ape-like proportions to an individual possessed of human understanding and ability.

It is the aftermath of war and not the period of war itself which is productive of drama. The subject of war is not even a topic for literary pursuit until such a time when national feeling has cooled and life becomes more nearly normal again. No plays of importance appeared during the period

²⁶ Ibid., p. 377.

of conflict between the North and the South. Most of the plays, which were hastily written, disappeared soon after the war. The theme of war was not forgotten but it was not until some time later in the post-war period that any plays worth consideration were written. The period following the war brought about great changes in the modes of living and conducting business but most of these changes were favorable and therefore not subjects of interest to the satirist. For at least ten years after the Civil War there was the inevitable aftermath, a moral let-down. Burlesques none too praiseworthy degenerated into "leg shows" so that the term burlesque for a long time after came to mean cheap playhouses where the riff-raff gathered to be entertained by seductive dancers and obscene performances. Gradually burlesques gave way to the musical comedies. The reconstruction period, the western expansion and industrial enterprise turned men away from artistic endeavors. The theatre of this time suffered a severe set-back just when it was beginning to show signs of developing into a native institution.

It is to Augustin Daly, however, that we first turn after the war. Professor Quinn begins his first volume of A History of the American Drama From the Civil War to the Present Day with this statement, "Modern American drama begins with Augustin Daly."²⁷ He not only wrote plays but he was a theatrical artist who appreciated the firmly laid foundation of our drama in some of the fine productions of the past. As a manager he resented sentimental plays and wrote a satire called Roughing It to voice his opinion of such plays. The play like many of his other works shows definite French influence. Another play, adapted from the German, is his Princess Royal, in which he directs his criticism toward the absurdities of the romantic

drama. In Divorce, which was first presented in New York in 1871, he uses the contrast theme which Royall Tyler popularized.

Bronson Howard is best remembered for his efforts to organize the playwrights into the American Dramatists Club, which since became The Society of American Dramatists and Composers. Margaret Mayorga, unlike Arthur H. Quinn, gives little tribute to Augustin Daly and centers her attention upon Bronson Howard as the herald of the "Dawn of American Drama." Although his plays, too, suffered some from foreign flavor, yet he made a greater effort than Daly to set up a native drama and no doubt is more deserving of the honor of being considered by many critics "father of the modern American drama". Barrett H. Clark says of him, "Howard was among the first to realize that in the America of his day there was material for an indigenous drama, and he did his best, in spite of the French influences to abandon the conventions of the past and point a way to the future.²⁸ While the question of who deserves the honor of being the founder of our American drama is an interesting one, yet it will have to be passed on for the more important task of determining Mr. Howard's status as a satirist. At least in this light he outweighs Mr. Daly. Howard's subjects for satirical writing are more universal than those of his contemporary and more significant of his time. Howard is generally best known for his Shenandoah because it is the most representative of the Civil War plays. He employs the theme of lovers torn apart by patriotism, and he demonstrates the manner of developing the historic play, yet he does not wield the powerful satiric weapons in this play as he does in The Henrietta. The major satirical thrust in this play is directed at "Big Business", money madness and a passion for ruthless

²⁸ A Study of the Modern Drama, p. 362.

speculation. Although truly American in theme it is not Howard's best written play. As for its satiric possibilities it not only represents Howard's best attempts at satire but it is one of the most representative of satires in the field of modern American drama.

One of his better known society dramas, Aristocracy, is a satire on the newly-rich as exemplified in a western family whose efforts to break into the exclusive social set of New York by means of a European alliance takes us back again to Mrs. Mowatt's Fashion, the influence of which is ever recurring.

Previous to the Civil War, drama had followed literature in general in the romantic fashion. In opposition to romanticism a number of short story writers, including Bret Harte, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, Mark Twain and William Dean Howells rose up to the defense of drama by attempting to write plays of a different tone divorced from nauseating sentimentality. Among these, Howells championed with his realistic treatment of life to the extent that he guided and inspired some of the later dramatists of realism, Harrigan, Thomas, Herne and Fitch who have all extended to him gratitude for his inspiration.

Howells produced charming and amusing plays that showed the work of a master playwright whose efforts actually reached the professional stage and met with wide acclaim. He is here mentioned because some of his most delightful works are made so by their satiric flavor. The Mouse Trap written in 1889 was played successfully in London. It will be more fully discussed in another chapter. It is a humorous little farce which innocently displays the folly of fear, so often exhibited in women of his generation, for harmless little creatures of the animal world. Even today when short-skirted

women have usurped man's realm his play still delights readers and audiences alike. His masterly treatment of farcical comedy might well have inspired Hoyt and Fitch who followed him with a deft satiric touch.

He may also have paved the way for some of our satiric minded musical comedy writers of the recent past by his gleeful "lyricated farce" as he himself calls A Sea Change or Love's Stowaway. Here again it is woman he satirizes; that irresponsible well-to-do spoiled type who does not know her own mind. Howells is not a misogynist but some of his best and most humorous plays pleasantly flaunt the weaknesses of the weaker sex. His use of a dream scene in A Sea Change, combining the fantastical with the realistic, shows his originality and creative ability. It likewise subdues the satiric slant. In this play Howells introduces the frequent chorus action which reminds one of the merry tunes of Gilbert and Sullivan. Howell's social consciousness reaches its peak in The Elevator and in The Unexpected Guests. In the latter play and in Five O'Clock Tea he rises above the farcical level and arrives at the comedy of manners stage.

Edward Harrigan is best known for his Irish characters and sketches but his other racial and national interpretations are likewise excellently portrayed. His best contribution to the American theatre is the burlesque. The best of his attempts in this field is found in his Mulligan cycle which began with a sketch and song presented in Chicago in 1873. The Mulligan Guard sketch was a burlesque upon the target excursions of the military organizations which were named after the local politicians of the various wards of New York City. The excursions often resulted in riots in which people were wounded or killed. In these sketches humorously portrayed, Harrigan hoped to put an end to the nuisance if possible. The characters

are continued in The Mulligan Guard Picnic, The Mulligan Guard Ball, The Mulligan Guard Nominee and others. The last one is a rollicking and amusing satire on politics. It ridicules women's organizations and satirizes the British in their fear of American intervention in Irish affairs. Harrigan continued until shortly after the turn of the century to amuse his audiences in the burlesque fashion by his interpretation of the various foreigners who have since become integral elements of our American nation.

About the same time Charles Hoyt was presenting his caricatures and satirical farces drawn from the more typical and middle-class American. His territory was from the East to the West while his characters varied from the politician to the clergyman, from the women's rights advocate to the undertaker. The subject matter of Hoyt's plays are limited to no one field although he did exceptionally well in his treatment of political satires. One of his most popular and best representative pieces is A Texas Steer which is a comedy travesty on an incapable congressman. It satirizes stupid and irregular methods of electing representatives to Congress and ridicules the follies and shams of society in Washington.

Being influenced by Howells he expressed himself in the farce. One of his first successful farces is A Bunch of Keys, or Where There's a Will, There's a Play. The title shows that in 1882 playwrights still continued the lengthy expository titles which often carried satiric implication. It is an example of the play with the "money talks" theme. Although the deceptions of business are portrayed in the play, yet this subject is not directly connected with the plot. Action is usually more important to Hoyt than authentic characterization. One episode of the play shows that pretentiousness was not confined to society. A delightful bit of conversation between

the clerk and the "bell-hop" of a hotel may serve to illustrate Hoyt's manner of writing. It is a very open style of satire with little left for the imagination.

Snaggs. Now Grimes, this is important. When a guest arrives, if one should arrive, we want to give him a good impression; first impressions count for a good deal. We want to make him think there is a crowd in the house, so the moment he enters you rush upstairs and ring all the bells in the house, then you rush down again and carry up pitchers of ice water. Guests always require ice water.

Grimes. Some folks like something in it, just to take out the cruelty.

Snaggs. Well, take up a bottle--an empty one, a black bottle, so it won't show that it isn't full.

Grimes. Why not take up a full one?

Snaggs. Grimesy my boy, I don't think you'd drink a drop, but you might spill some, and that would be a waste. Now go and see if anyone arrives by the train and yell out Grand View Hotel, as loudly as you can at the station.²⁹

Similar satire is contained in two other plays, The Rag Baby (1884) and A Brass Monkey (1888). Both plots are centered around men who take over business that they know nothing about. It was this theme that has given impetus to those later success plays of American youth.

In a Tin Soldier (1886) Mr. Hoyt shows a carry-over idea from some of the early plays like The Bucktails in which characters are significantly named. Tripp Walker, a mail carrier, Brooklyn Bridge, a gentleman of high position and Carry Story who lives next door are typical. Hoyt dealt with the subject of prohibition of liquor in A Temperance Town (1893) and woman's suffrage in A Contented Woman (1897). A Parlor Match (1884) points the way to plays which followed on the subject of quackery. In this last play he exposes the fake spiritualistic séance.

²⁹ Charles H. Hoyt, Five Plays, Act II, p. 22.

His satire cannot be pinned down to one or two types. He was a close observer of common life and revelled in recreating these images in his plays. There are no traces of the English and French dramas in his works as were found in those of his predecessors. His life went out with the close of the century but his plays became more significant as they began to relive in the comedies of his followers. His plays will not be discussed at this point because they will be given special attention in another chapter.

Except for Charles Hoyt and Clyde Fitch there were no true satirists in American drama during the last quarter of the century. James A. Herne, a well known actor and stage manager, indulged very little in satiric feeling. Margaret Fleming is his only excursion into the field of satire but it is a very important play and will be fully discussed under the topic "Conflict of the Sexes". It was written only eleven years after Nora closed the door of social convention in 1879, so James Herne seems to be the first pioneer among American dramatists who dared to approve of a single sex standard. Of recent years his Margaret Fleming is considered one of his best dramatic works because of the excellent portrayal of character in the role of Margaret. Professor Quinn highly compliments James A. Herne in his discussion of the play.

Margaret Fleming is the study of a woman's character. For a revelation of the nobility inherent in the cultivated American gentlewoman, it ranks with the portraits of Lina Bowen in Howells' Indian Summer and Isabel Archer in Henry James' The Portrait of a Lady.³⁰

Augustus Thomas has also dealt with the double standard of morals in As a Man Thinks (1911). The play moves rather laborously with too much analysis

³⁰ Op. Cit., Vol. I, p. 141.

of the emotions to make the satirical slant poignant. More strikingly satirical without apparent attempt to be so in his New Blood which shows the connection between politics and the related forces of capital and labor. This play was successfully presented in Chicago in 1894 when the Pullman Strike was in progress. That it was a sectional play and created local interest was demonstrated in its failure in New York City. In a more universal theme he brings to light the picture of politics in Washington in The Capitol (1895). He points out the prevailing influence of religion and financial power upon politics. His accurate accounts were based upon thorough investigations.

In more recent years he turned his observation and criticism into a problem play, Still Waters. The main issue in this drama is his definite stand against the prohibition of liquor. There is also the underlying criticism of political intervention. This aspect is shown in the role of a Senator who votes reluctantly according to the will of his constituents but hopes to use his own free will if elected again. The play attracted wide attention and interest when it was presented in Washington in 1925.

The Fitch era brings us to the close of the century and to a profusion of satiric dramas. Clyde Fitch was not only a prolific writer but a very versatile and talented one. Montrose Moses came to know him personally because of the negative criticism he pronounced upon one of the dramatist's plays. Moses gives us an intimate view of Fitch's writing procedure in the introduction to The Moth and the Flame.

His interest was never concerned solely with dominant characters; he was quick rather to sense the idiosyncracies of the average person. His observation was caught by the seemingly unimportant, but no less identifying peculiarities of the middle class. Besides which, his irony was never more happy than when aimed against that social set which he knew, and good-humouredly satirized.³¹

³¹ Montrose J. Moses, Representative Plays by American Dramatists, Vol. III, pp. 523-524.

In 1901 he revived the satirical social comedy with his incomparably pathetic comedy The Climbers. It is one of his earliest plays but so biting is the satire that it almost touches invective. Fitch condemns not only the hypocrisy of the women who are social climbers but he lashes the business climbers whose moral standard has sunk to the lowest level. Although Fitch seems to moralize or become didactic in many of his plays he was not a social reformer like either Jones or Shaw, both of whom he admired greatly. Mr. W. P. Eaton says that "He was popular even in satiric writing because it was a part of his creed that a play should have entertainment value, and he saw to it that his plays either amused or roused the emotions of the public."³² Although he was a satirist he never let his satire outweigh these qualities. He possessed a literary sense, a fine discrimination in utterance. His epigrammatic dialogue often reached the level of the comedy of manners.

The Truth (1906) is a genuine play of this type and considered by many critics his best. It was one of the few American plays of its time to be successfully played abroad. The following brief excerpt from the opening scene of the play may serve to illustrate his knowledge of human weaknesses and his clever craftsmanship in presenting his observations of the "social-set". The lines are taken from the play as it appeared in the first volume of Chief Contemporary Dramatists. Mrs. Lindon, a fashionable but high strung woman is seen with a friend in the apartment of Mrs. Warder who has just been discovered as the woman in the case of Mr. Lindon's philanderings. Laura tries to advise and quiet the young wife. They are watching for Mrs. Warder.

Laura. ...You shouldn't have come here at once. You should have waited till you had time to think over your information and calm yourself a little.

Mrs. Lindon. I couldn't wait! Becky! One of my oldest friends! One of my bridesmaids!

Laura. What!

Mrs. Lindon. No, she wasn't, but she might have been; she was my next choice if any one had backed out.³³

It was in the field of social satire that Fitch excelled. He mingled much with the society from which he drew his situations and characters. Mr. Moses says "Human foibles and frailties were, therefore, his specialty. Out of his vast product of playwriting, one remembers stories and scenes, rather than personages; one recalls characteristics rather than characters; one treasures quick interplay of words rather than the close reason for such."³⁴ The title of The Truth is in itself satiric because the play is a character satire of a woman who is a natural-born liar. She is drawn up against Tom Warder who is so truthful that the contrast is more apparent. The play according to some authorities marks the crest of the playwright's efforts. Contrary to many of his other works this one embodies vivid, real characterization. Mr. W. P. Eaton believes that it was influential in shaping the satiric character dramas of a later period.

It was odd that when this play was first produced in New York, John Corbin was almost alone among the critics in recognizing its technical merits, its modernity of spirit, its significance in the American theatre. Yet without it Kelly's Craig's Wife or Howard's Silver Chord might never have been written.³⁵

³³Thomas H. Dickinson, Act I, p. 241.

³⁴Op. Cit., p. 525.

³⁵Op. Cit., 309.

Apart from the twenty-two adaptations of foreign plays and dramatization of novels Mr. Fitch wrote thirty-three original American dramas. Most of them embodied some satire or kindly irony. In his dramas he deals with all channels of social life which he has closely observed. He himself has spoken of the variety of subjects which he so skillfully sets to dramatic action.

He intended The City to be his best work but before he had time to revise it, he died. This play deals with the subject of man's environment which was being intensely studied at the time. Fitch did not blame the city for the failures of the Rand family nor did he hold up to praise the country for sustaining man's moral fiber. He pointed out as the theme note of the play that we draw out in accordance with what we ourselves put into anything.

Since the death of Clyde Fitch in 1909 we step upon a new threshold of American drama. He wrote a series of important plays which have come to be an inspiration to dramatists who were to follow. Mr. Quinn paints this picture of his standing in the dramatic world in 1927.

...his contribution to our drama lies primarily in the portraiture of American men and women, prevented by their social inhibitions from frank expression of their complete natures, but presenting in the consequent struggle a drama quiet yet intense, so restrained in power that his own generation mistook its fineness for weakness. There has rarely been so complete a reversal of critical judgement, for he is now placed securely among the foremost writers of high comedy and his death at the height of his power is beginning to be looked upon as a tragedy in our dramatic history.³⁶

The close of the century showed a decline in dramatic production. The co-authors of Contemporary American Literature believe that practically no meritorious dramatic literature appeared during the first fifteen years of the twentieth century.

³⁶ Op. Cit., Vol. I, p. 296.

This prevalent condition is only partially explicable, but certain determining circumstances may be sought in the low level of theatrical taste in the period, in the unconditioned control of the theatre by avowedly commercial producers, and in the persistent and sycophantic dependence, even after the passage of the international dramatic copyright act of American producers on the sensationally successful dramas of England, France, and Germany.³⁷

The first fifteen years of the twentieth century were years of contentment for the most part. No great problems, social or economic, pressed heavily upon the people. Sentimental plays of melodramatic formula, light operatic pieces, slapstick comedy, spectacular scenes, minstrels, and even poetic dramas gave great variety to the stage of this day but they contributed little toward literary attainment. There was meager space for the satirist. Most of his work was preserved in the past. A few dramatists, however, kept alive the spirit of satire. The influence of Ibsen and Strindberg was wedging its way insidiously into the minds of American playwrights.

William Vaughn Moody was among the first to preach revolt. But he was a high priest more than a satirist. In The Great Divide (1906) we feel the urge of revolt in the character of Stephen Ghent, the symbol of the freer West, as opposed to the rigid Puritan rule of New England with its inherited traditions and inhibitions as portrayed in the role of Ruth Gordon. Moody approaches acrid irony in his contrast between force and freedom as exemplified in the opposed personalities of the heroine and hero. Ghent is the individual who exercises his right to self-expression and choice. In contrast, Ruth is the portrait of a tortured Puritanic conscience enslaved against her own happiness. She is not free to reject the inflexible dictates

³⁷ John M. Manly and Edith Rickert, p. 64

and the severe discipline of generations of ancestry who in their austerity and prudishness peer down at her through faded colors upon a frayed canvas. Moody was an early apostle of the fight for individual expression and freedom which eventually became the most striking feature of the new drama.

Satirical censorship moves a step further in The Faith Healer (1909). The emotional conflict of the hero offers Moody the opportunity to cast the faith healer in the foreground. He is silhouetted against the external opposing forces of the "intolerant dogmatism" of science in the role of Dr. Littlefield, the modern physician, and the ancient religious opposition to any occult power as portrayed in the role of Reverend John Culpepper, the clergyman. In this play Willaim V. Moody attacks those cults of healing whose cures are never beyond human power although they claim divine intervention.

Percy MacKaye, who is generally associated with spectacular drama, also deals with emotional conflict. He was one of the first dramatists to portray the theory of ideas in dramatic productions. One of the best examples of this type of play is The Scarecrow, which he completed in 1910. MacKaye received his inspiration from Hawthorne's Feathertop. In the role of the Scarecrow we see New England sorcery and witchcraft attacked more bitterly than ever before. Even James Nelson Barker in his Superstition was never so severe. There is, however, indication, even to the similarity of names, that MacKaye may have been impressed by the work of his predecessor. In Goody Rickby we see all the deceptive and harmful practices of witchcraft. The character of Lord Ravensbane or the Scarecrow ironically portrayed as a hero is a tragic figure in his dependency upon a pipe to maintain his human power that he might possess the love for Rachel. This fantastic play ap-

proaches the poetic and promises permanency in the climax of this imaginary character when he flings his pipe aside in despair, that the woman he loves may be freed of his grotesque presence. His struggle against himself ends in the defeat of his false self and the triumph of "A Man!"

In our study of satiric American dramas we cannot omit Langdon Mitchell's The New York Idea. It is one of the outstanding satires of the early twentieth century. So universal are the satiric implications in the play that it has been translated into several foreign languages. Since it will be fully discussed in the next chapter we will not dwell upon it here but merely quote directly from Mitchell's own words to discover his satirical purpose. Montrose Moses has taken them from a letter he received directly from the playwright. The following is an excerpt from a portion of that letter which appeared in an introduction to the play in the collection before mentioned, Representative Plays.

The play was written for Mrs. Fiske. When I was writing the play, I had really no idea of satirizing divorce or a law or anything specially temperamental or local. What I wanted to satirize was a certain extreme frivolity in the American spirit and in our American life--frivolity in the deep sense--not just a girl's frivolity, but that profound, sterile, amazing frivolity which one observes and meets in our churches, in political life, in literature, in music; in short in every department of American thought, feeling and action. The old-fashioned, high-bred family in "The New York Idea" are solemnly frivolous, and the fast, light-minded, highly intelligent hero and heroine are frivolous in their own delightful way--frivolity, of course, to be used for tragedy or comedy. Our frivolity is, I feel, on the edge of the tragic. Indeed, I think it entirely tragic, and there are lines, comedy lines, in "The New York Idea", that indicate this aspect of the thing.³⁸

The New York Idea was first presented in the city of New York at the Lyric Theatre in 1907. It is a forerunner for numerous social satires which followed in later years. Perhaps Mr. Mitchell should receive some of the honor

³⁸ Op. Cit., p. 600.

of the Pulitzer Prize of 1917 which was awarded to Jesse Lynch Williams for his Why Marry?

The double standard theme appears again in Eugene Walter's Easiest Way (1908). The bitter irony which is both the warp and the woof of the play is the result of Mr. Walter's years of experience in theatrical work and as a newspaper reporter. It is the old story of transgression and its consequence. Laura is the victim of her financial dependence which leads her into sin, while the men with whom she is associated suffer nothing. The same sting of modern life he portrays under different circumstances in Paid in Full (1908) and in Fine Feathers (1913). Until the war the double standard idea was becoming increasingly popular. Although after the war when women began to establish their rights there still appeared a few plays like Barry's Paris Bound which continued the idea in a more modern set-up.

When the double standard of morality was being treated it was refreshing to have a woman rise up who knew well both woman's and man's point of view. Rachel Crothers is one of the few women who has written successfully in the dramatic field of American literature. Her plays, like Moody's, generally embody a criticism of life. It is coincidental that our most important women playwrights are exponents of satire. One outstanding woman dramatist seems to belong to each age. Mrs. Mowatt who flays her own sex in Fashion belonged to the pre-Civil War period, Rachel Crothers who has been such a prolific writer is followed by Edna Ferber and she in turn is followed by Clare Boothe of our own day. Miss Boothe's criticism of The Women (1936) is the most biting injunction ever levied at any group of women by either a man or a woman. Rachel Crothers has made use of the double standard idea in several of her plays. The most important of these is A Man's World (1909).

In advance of the other plays built on the same theme it offers at least a partial solution for woman's dependency: a career would establish her independence. With this idea Miss Crothers forges ahead of her time and sets the time clock against woman's bondage. However loyal she is to her sex in this play she seems to extend her sympathy to man in his right to be the support and head of his family as shown in He and She (1911). Two years later she holds women responsible for the moral conditions of the time in Ourselves. Some of her later plays will be considered more fully further on in this study.

Equally as persistent was the vogue for business plays. Winchell Smith is the chief exponent of this type of play. He is best known for his Lightnin' (1918) which has been one of his most successful but not the first of his plays. Frank Bacon of post-war fame played the sentimental role of Lightnin' Bill Jones. More critical are his other plays such as Brewster's Millions (1906) and his Fortune Hunter of 1909. In the latter play he shows the influence of Hoyt by using some of the same activities used in Rag Baby (1884). The theme of operating a business which a man knows nothing about, or raising "big money" by clever schemes were some of the motifs employed in the business plays. They continued to be popular for many years after the World War.

Another follower of Hoyt is George Ade. His plays are many in number but not of any literary value. Most of them were mild satires of common folk like the small town politician who succeeds not by his wits but his personality as presented in The County Chairman (1903). The next year he depicted college life humorously in a panorama of all types seen on a college campus from the president down to those who labored for their education. He

called this play The College Widow. A sharper satire of college life he presented in Just Out of College (1905). It is a criticism of the college man who goes into the business world unprepared. George Ade's productions are nearly all of the cartoon type.

George M. Cohan's productions are of a similar character but his jovial personality and ability to act in them removed any bitterness that may have been submerged in them. His Hit-the-Trail Holliday (1915) is a good humored treatment of a bartender who leads in a prohibition crusade. It was exceedingly popular at the time when "Billy Sunday" was at the height of his evangelistic career. His plays are too numerous to mention here but we shall study him in his latest musical comedy, the political satire on the "New Deal". Mr. Clark says of him:

Like the best native playwrights, he is master of observation in the surface details of life. He has evolved a highly personal method of play writing essentially of the theatre; there is not a trace of "literature" in any of his plays, but there is a fund of humor and a fundamental optimism altogether American.³⁹

At the end of the Harrigan, Hoyt, Ade and Cohan line of satirical comedy writers is another George. It might seem that the job was left to George to do. If not a man of letters George S. Kaufman is the outstanding satirist of our day. Like many playwrights he had his start in journalism. Since the beginning of his career he has preferred to share his work with a collaborator. Shortly after the World War was over he began to sense the spirit of revolt against the well worn theatrical conventions. With Marc Connelly he developed a caricature of an inane and bromidic woman whose counterpart appeared in Franklin P. Adams' column in a New York newspaper. This satire, Dulcy, appeared in 1921 and since that time Mr. Kaufman has worked continu-

ously up to the present time publishing at least one play a year. He is best known for his musical satire Of Thee I Sing which was the Pulitzer Prize play of 1931-32. It was with Morrie Ryskind that he shared that honor. The play is a very clever and humorous criticism of national politics. Some typical lines will be quoted in the third chapter. But politics is only one of the many topics at which he shakes his critical finger. His methods vary, too. Sometimes he uses a sort of fantastic touch as in his June Moon (1929) which he wrote with Ring Lardner whose typically vulgar language is very apparent in the dialogue. Mr. Kaufman has only once demonstrated what he could do unaided. That was in 1925 when he wrote The Butter and Egg Man, another comedy based on imbecility. It is difficult to choose from his vast supply of plays, typical ones. Since elimination is necessary only those which fit in categorically according to chapter headings will be treated. Like Eugene O'Neill his work is an era in itself. Mr. Joseph Wood Krutch says of his endeavors:

Mr. Kaufman's work is seen to hesitate between pure farce on the one hand and, on the other, topical satire of the sort which made such early plays as Dulcy, To the Ladies, and Beggar on Horseback a part of the post-war revolt against current ideals and sentiment.⁴⁰

One of the first to accept the invitation to unrestrained, original writing was Eugene O'Neill who is not a satirist in the narrow sense but one whose irony strikes deeper than obvious satire ever will. Some one has said that "irony is to satire what expressionism is to realism". One of the early examples of his well known "ironic life force" is deeply buried within the heart of Anna Christie (1921). Anna is the mouthpiece of O'Neill's burning irony of the sea which all but consumes him in many of his plays. A minor theme of this play is his outcry against the unreasonable double standard

of morality. It is a sordid and cruel presentment of the idea but it still remains one of his favorite dramas. His ending was not intentionally sentimental but defiance for false conventions and an attempt to break down the barriers of error. The ironic elements of this play will be discussed and illustrated in Chapter II.

In the Hairy Ape (1922) he descends to the deepest irony of a stoke-hole with Yank who believes that he "belongs" in as much as the stokers are the "guys" who run the ship. But he is disillusioned after he moves through a symbolistic world to the zoo. Isaac Goldberg believes that he is reincarnated into an ape. "But belong is precisely what Yank does not, and the eight scenes that compromise the play spell his disillusionment, until he meets a grisly end in the arms of a gorilla at the zoo. Ape has come back to ape."⁴¹ The Hairy Ape is an example of what Mr. Goldberg means when he says, "O'Neill is expression, while Glaspell is repression."⁴² There are numerous interpretations of this play. Martha Bellinger says, "The Hairy Ape is the confused and fierce struggle of strength which is maladjusted to its environment."⁴³

In Marco Millions (1927) he presents a satiric romance in a symbolic manner by using the historic figure of Marco Polo as the spirit of business enterprise who risks all for pure materialistic gain. But his symbolism is deeper than frustrated love and business success at any cost; it deals with a universal problem, the conflict between the East and West of the world as Moody did in a more local manner in The Great Divide of our country.

⁴¹ The Drama of Transition, p. 470.

⁴² Ibid., p. 472.

⁴³ A Short History of the Drama, p. 360.

O'Neill is too great a genius to be merely a satirist. His world is one in which the individual is in conflict with himself. It is his power to perceive and portray these conflicts of unrest, submerged in man's inner self-- a universal trait which makes him a genius among modern dramatists. However great he is we are only concerned here with whatever satirical tendencies which appear in his work. Lacking the humorous slant his critical attitude approaches the purely ironic vein. To follow him chronologically from his early works through to Days Without End (1934) is to accompany a distressed soul through various stages of philosophical probing until he returns to his father's house and recognizes the peace of religious faith which he once spurned. Interesting though such a study would be we cannot dwell upon it here but merely select a few of his most ironic plays and view them more closely under their respective chapter headings.

In order that we may soon reach the ultimate goal of this study, that is to trace satirical tendencies in our national dramas under their various topical headings, we will complete the pre-view by briefly picturing some of the changes which our dramatists were confronted with after the war. One of the first reactions to the World War was to break down the sentimental worship of the soldier and to show war as it really is. Gilbert Emery began the movement with The Hero (1920). It is but a mild attack upon the uniform. A much more realistic episodic piece is What Price Glory? which followed in 1924. Maxwell Anderson collaborated with Lawrence Stallings in presenting war as they saw it: men in the trenches wallowing in filth, blasphemous and lewd in conversation, and above all hating war. This play led to a series of anti-war plays including the famous British versions like Robert Nichols' and Maurice Browne's Wings Over Europe, R. C. Sheriff's Journey's End and

Somerset Maugham's For Services Rendered. Our own If This Be Treason written by John H. Holmes is based upon an imaginary war crisis between Japan and the United States. It is closely knit with political intrigue and personal gain at the expense of war. Of these anti-war dramas Peace on Earth presented by George Sklar and Albert Maltz is the first approach to war as the inevitable outcome of a social system which permits fighting for profit. It has a strong tang of the work of the "leftists" who endeavor to make mockery of the war slogan--"a war to end all wars".

The revolt of woman and the breaking down of the double standard is another change which the war brought about. We have seen earlier evidence of an attempt at a single standard of morals, but woman freed politically and socially is an after-the-war reality. One of the first of these plays of woman's revolt is Zona Gale's Miss Lulu Bett (1920) which was followed the next year by Booth Tarkington's Intimate Strangers. The first career woman is found in the leading role in The Famous Mrs. Fair which was written by James Forbes in 1919. It exposes woman in her attempt to forget her home and her family for worldly recognition. Women established their freedom so firmly after they obtained the ballot that the question of their place in life was no longer a problem for the satirist.

The younger generation and their association with their parents is another topic which developed more fully after the World War. Lewis Beach in His Goose Hangs High (1924) and Philip Barry in Holiday (1928) are exponents of youth and their problems. While their intentions may not have been satirically biting they at least arrive at effective satiric results. Rachel Crother's early attempt to approach the jazz age youth is more openly satiric in her Nice People (1921). None of these are caricatures but they

are realistically presented. An expressionistic drama Roger Bloomer (1923) deals with the problems of the sensitive adolescent.

Plays of social conflict or disorder followed the war and became more cutting until after the worst years of the depression. One of the first of these was the Adding Machine which was written in 1923 by Elmer Rice a year after The Hairy Ape appeared. Both of these were built on the German expressionistic plan and both were criticisms of the social order. In the former play Mr. Rice tried to show how the machine age has enslaved the millions of little human machines who have no choice but to work for the preservation of a life which offers nothing. The title of Zero itself is satirically significant of the ignorant, inhibited slave to capitalistic rule. It approaches the level of irony found in Eugene O'Neill's dramas of social criticism.

Another expressionistic play in this class is Processional written by John Howard Lawson and presented by the Theatre Guild. Although essentially expressionistic it is a mongrel mass of the combined forms of rough caricature, tragedy and satire, and pathos and burlesque to signify the theme of frantic disorder of present day life and the emotional confusion which it produces. One of the causes of this chaotic condition is the depression. Elmer Rice leads up to the subject in Street Scene, the Pulitzer Prize play of 1928-29 which depicts a melodramatic presentation of realistic pictures of poverty. The playwright strikes hard at the tragedy of the tenement houses in the city slums. He does not cheapen his people in caricature but ironically points to the fact that in spite of their sordid, dingy environment they remain, through it all, human beings. Again he sounds the ironic note in We, the People, another episodic preachment against poverty and the

cruel results of depression.

Eleanor Flexner says, "We, the People, a panoramic and sprawling survey of the depression...exercised great influence on young writers. The flood-gates were now open."⁴⁴ Miss Flexner is referring to the "new left theatres", the radical and communistic groups of playwrights who have been preaching their doctrines chiefly in theatres controlled or owned by the "militant labor" groups. One of the first plays presented by them was Peace on Earth. It was followed by Stevedore composed by Paul Peters and George Sklar and presented at the Theatre Union in 1934. John Wexley's They Shall Not Die was another of their contributions. It is based on the famous Scottsboro court case. Stevedore is a protest of the negro and his problem in society. Wexley does not caricature the negro ludicrously as he was so often presented in the past; rather he depicts him as a human being deserving recognition and respect. The story centers around a race riot in Louisiana. It is a propaganda as well as a problem play with deep satiric significance for those who are guilty of promoting prejudice and hatred between the races. These are only a few of the plays written and presented by the "leftist" groups. Joseph Wood Krutch gives a little history of this recent theatrical movement in these words:

After 1929 there began, however, to appear sporadically on Broadway various plays which either dealt specifically with some social problem or dramatized under intentionally thin disguises some current cause celebre. The way had been led by Gods of Lightning (1928) in which Maxwell Anderson and Harold Hickerson had made a sort of chronicle melodrama out of the Sacco--Vanzetti case.⁴⁵

Mr. John Howard Lawson is another whose plays are based on Marxian

⁴⁴ Op. Cit., p. 289.

⁴⁵ The American Drama Since 1918, p. 246.

principles. His previously mentioned plays and Gentlewoman all received favor and approval of these groups.

One who is better known than Lawson but of the same mind is Clifford Odets. Whatever his opinions may be he is given much favorable criticism by most of the recognized critics of drama today. He is particularly commended for his dialogue and clearly defined characterizations. Golden Boy has been his most popular play but his later one, Rocket to the Moon (1938), is his finest work. Golden Boy presents a psychological study of the problem of devastating conflict of inner desires against outward forces of a competitive society with its false standards of success. The young man in the play who has the talent of a violinist but desires to be a boxer represents many thousands of young people who are driven to their place in life by a generally accepted policy of attaining success in a field not of their choice but in one which they will be "somebody". Odet's Rocket to the Moon centers about a colorless Dr. Stark who is married but not satisfied. It is the ordinary case of drifting away from his wife and finding love in the person of his office girl for a brief time. Eventually he comes to realize that he has always accepted and taken things for granted, wife and all. Finally in seeing himself as he really is he wishes to begin again. Mr. Odets does not finish his story but leaves us in the dark office where Stark closes the door as he casually remarks, "Sonofagun! ...What I don't know would fill a book!"⁴⁶ And we ask ourselves whether there is a beginning for Stark or not.

The most recent examples of the social dramas are in the form of the musical satire like Pins and Needles, a problem revue, written by Harold J.

⁴⁶Act III, p. 244.

Rome and Joseph Schrank and presented by the International Ladies Garment Workers, and Marc Blitzstein's daring satirical operetta The Cradle Will Rock. With the plays of the Laborites borrowing from the opera and the comedy it seems they have gained a step forward for the propagandists of the working world and the revolutions of an economic system.

Most of these "Leftist" plays are deeply ironical with an under-tone of ire which approaches the old invective style. The humor is sparse, the message is in generally cutting telegraphic portrayal and on the whole depressive in tone. They have nothing of the jovial burlesque of Hoyt, Harrigan, or Cohan. No doubt it is this mood which has caused the Theatre Union and the Group Theatre to suffer a decline.

Perhaps it is the bitter, stark realism of our recent drama which has begun a revival of poetic plays. Maxwell Anderson has led the way and has been followed by T. S. Eliot and Archibald MacLeish in an effort "to bring to the theatre the color and poetry of American life such as cannot be expressed in terms of photographic realism".⁴⁷

Just at present the theatre has been taking a political slant as might be expected in such fretful times. Burns Mantle in his introduction to his Best Plays of 1938-1939 interprets in the outstanding plays of the past year, a definite turn toward national consciousness. He says:

It takes the theatre a year, and sometimes three years, to turn around and set about the business of developing a trend. The trend this last season, insofar as one appeared, was largely patriotic. At least in the sense that several outstanding plays took on a political coloring.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Barrett H. Clark, A Study of Modern Drama, p. 415.

⁴⁸ p. v.

Mr. Mantle refers to Maxwell Anderson's Knickerbocker Holiday, Elmer Rice's American Landscape, George Kaufman's and Moss Hart's The American Way and the most outstanding of dramatic successes, Robert Sherwood's Abe Lincoln in Illinois. It is to the last of these that he refers in these words: "Mr. Sherwood would bring his country back to a sane and open-minded review of those constructive philosophies Abraham Lincoln preached as a people's champion, and without prejudices as a capitalist's critic."⁴⁹

All of these plays ring with definite criticism and warning. They are clothed in effective drama but the underlying satiric or ironic note is struck. During the last few years most of the plays in which any satire is embodied show very little of the gay, carefree, happy note of criticism of the satirical musical comedy or burlesque. They are indeed a reflection of the spirit of the day.

Our satire has come a long way from Royall Tyler's The Contrast. It seems to have reached the end of the line in the criticism of the "Leftists". What next? Perhaps we can better determine that after we have taken a close-up view of the plays in the following chapters. We will first view the scene from the angle of social satire or society exposed.

THE SATIRE OF SOCIAL AND DOMESTIC LIFE

CHAPTER II

Social satire which may be traced to the comedies of Aristophanes, is the most inevitable type of satire to spring from the mind of man. We find it used by the dramatist of every age and of all nations. We have already noted some of the ancient social satires. Even the Elizabethans held themselves up to ridicule. For modern origins of our social satiric drama we can trace Richard Brinsley Sheridan as almost a direct influence in his world famous play The School for Scandal. It has given more than a suggestion to our dramatists of polite society comedies and to those who have made use of caricature from Royall Tyler's day until the present time.

In our modern era in America, William Dean Howells was a pioneer in ridiculing the shams of society in his amusing little farces which can still be read with pleasure. A Sea Change (1888) is a burlesque type in which Howells combines musical scores with fantasy. In the play there is not a direct dart at any current craze or foible but it satirizes the inconsequent and fickle type of American girl who does not know her own mind. She commands everyone who comes in contact with her to cater to her every whim. The setting is at sea on a "Retarder" some two days out from the East coast on the Atlantic. When Muriel discovers that Theron whom she rejected is on the same ship she appeals to the captain to have him removed at once. One opportunity to cast him off upon a floating iceberg, is in keeping with her selfish demand. It is only after she sees how he is welcomed by the Ice Princess and her maidens of the iceberg that she is willing to accept him. There are frequent incidental satirical thrusts at Harvard, at tipping, at bribing, and the influence of money. These are precious absurdities in

comic opera style. That Howells may have borrowed ideas from Gilbert and Sullivan is directly implied when Muriel's father addresses Theron after he renders his departure song.

Mr. Vane. Excuse me, Mr. Gay, but isn't this last song of yours rather too much like some of Gilbert-Sullivan's things?

Theron. There is a slight resemblance.¹

It is interesting to note Howells' admission of the earlier writers' influence. Muriel's ridiculous demands give a perfect picture of her type.

Captain. And what can I do for you miss?

Muriel. Nothing but the man at the wheel makes me giddy turning it round so.

Captain. through his trumpet, to the Man at the Wheel, Lash your wheel.

Man at the Wheel. obeying, Ay, Ay, sir!²

When Theron is leaving the ship the deck steward's hand is enlarged in a fantastic manner. The words which follow indicate a slur at tipping.

Steward. Don't forget the steward, sir!

Theron. Have you change for a hundred dollar bill?

Steward. I could keep the change, sir!³

In her own words Muriel paints a picture of herself.

Muriel--A Statement

I am a member of that aristocracy
Wholly composed of the lovelier sex,
Which in the heart of our own New World Democracy,
Reigns, the observer to please and perplex.
Since I was born, well, I do not think really,
That I have been of the least use on earth:
All has been done that could be done, ideally,
Utterly useless to make me from birth.

.....

¹ Act II, p. 130.

² Ibid., Act I, pp. 59-60.

³ Ibid., Act II, pp. 130-131.

Dressed like one born to purple imperial;
Housed like a duchess, and served like a lord;
And, like the heroine of a cheap serial,
By all that looked at me wildly adored.⁴

Bronson Howard's The Henrietta (1887) is essentially a satire on the unethical methods of the magnates of high finance in the United States but there are incidental satiric lines attacking the social world as well. The old thrust at the members of "the better class" in their reverence for royalty and things foreign is depicted in the marriage of the money magnate's daughter to an English Lord who has nothing to offer but his title. Upon meeting his father-in-law for the first time the Lord is perplexed at him.

Lord Arthur. Mary, my dear!

Lady Mary. Lord Arthur!

Lord Arthur. Are all the girls' fathers in America like that one?

Lady Mary. I wish they were all dear, good kind fathers as he is.

Lord Arthur. Yes he is very kind, only he's such a queer old chap...

Lady Mary. (laughing merrily). Ha! ha! ha! You must remember that papa isn't accustomed to the British aristocracy yet. (Going to him. Throws her arms around his neck.) My own dear, sweet little English lord! I was astonished too, when I first met you. But I love you now, darling, and so will papa; he's just as fond of pets as I am. But I want to talk to Alice a little. (Places hands on his shoulders and forces him gently on ottoman. Places hands on each cheek and turns him towards fire.) Sit down, Artie dear, and look into the fire until I get back.⁵

Bertie, who is considered by his father, a fool, satirizes the insipid club man of that day. The young man is a parasitic fop who understands much more about dress than business. A few lines taken from his conversation with Dr. Wainright, the family physician, will explain his type.

⁴Ibid., Act I, p. 37.

⁵Allen G. Halline, American Plays, Act I, p. 431.

Wainright. Just up?

Bertie. No, breakfast.

Wainright. Half past eleven...Out late last night?

Bertie. Club--three o'clock.

Wainright. What was going on?

Bertie. Nothing. Nothing ever does go on--at our club--you know; it's a swell club.

Wainright. Merely conversing together till that hour?

Bertie. We never converse at our club.

Wainright. Thinking?

Bertie. No; just staying.⁶

Later when Mr. Vanalstyne sees his daughter approaching with her newly acquired husband, the Lord, we get further reference to the club and a lightly tossed fling at society women.

Vanalstyne. ...There comes Mary, with my new son-in-law; just arrived today. How the devil that girl picked up the little English lord--all by herself, without a mother--is a mystery to me. Bertie is delighted. He can take him to the club, and set him up among his fellow Anglomaniacs.⁷

The social satire is much more pronounced in The Climbers (1901). It is a creation of Clyde Fitch, the outstanding satirist of his day. The first act of the play is definitely a satire upon New York society and the elements of which it is composed. The first act is laid in the drawing room of the heartless Mrs. Hunter who has just returned from her husband's funeral. She is presented in conversation with her daughters. The elder daughter, Blanche, tries to defend her dead father for having left them bankrupt be-

⁶ Ibid., p. 421.

⁷ Ibid., Act II, p. 430.

cause he tried to keep up to the extravagance of the mother and younger daughter. Mrs. Hunter is contrasted with her cultured sister-in-law, Ruth. This scene was so daring in 1900 that theatrical managers refused to promote it because it made mock of sacred things. After Miss Amelia Bingham finally produced The Climbers the public showed that the producers had not conjectured correctly on how the play would be received. Here is W. P. Eaton's account of public reaction toward the play.

...and the act far from mocking sacred things, poked malicious satire at the people who cannot understand sacred things...When the first night curtain went down on that act, in 1901, the audience must have realized that the American drama was beginning to sign its declaration of independence, that here was social satire done with a sure hand and a keen eye, with point and purpose and style.⁸

Judging the lines superficially it would be easy to think of The Climbers as an utterly impious travesty of so sacred a subject as death. The heartless Mrs. Hunter's first words are indeed shocking unless one catches the spirit of satire and ridicule of the Mrs. Hunters of society.

Mrs. Hunter. (With a long sigh) Oh, I am so glad to be back home and the whole thing over without a hitch!...(Tearfully.) My dears, it was a great success! Everybody was there!⁹

Clara, the younger daughter, is the counterpart of her mother. Mrs. Hunter has just complained because Jessie hasn't cried. She says that people will think she didn't love her father. Clara responds by assuring her mother that she did her part.

Clara. I'm sure I've cried enough. I've cried buckets.

Mrs. Hunter. (Kissing Clara.) Yes, dear, you are your mother's own child. And you lose the most by it, too.

⁸ The Drama in English, p. 307.

⁹ Act I, p. 477.

Clara. Yes, indeed, instead of coming out next month, and having a perfectly lovely winter, I'll have to mope the whole season, and, if I don't look out, be a wall flower without ever having been a bud...And think of all the clothes we brought home from Paris last month.¹⁰

The contrast between Mr. Hunter's respectable sister and her sister-in-law almost reaches invective in the outspoken manner in which the sister reprimands Mrs. Hunter who brings criticism upon herself in censoring the actions of her husband's sister.

Mrs. Hunter. I think it's awful, Ruth, and I feel I have a right to say it--I think you owed it to my feelings to have worn a long veil; people will think you didn't love your brother...

Ruth. I can't remain quiet any longer. George--(She almost breaks down, but she controls herself.) This funeral is enough, with its show and worldliness! I don't believe there was a soul in the church you didn't see! Look at your handkerchief! Real grief isn't measured by the width of a black border...The funeral was revolting to me!--a show spectacle, a social function, and for him who you know hated the very thing. (She stops a moment to control her tears and her anger.) I saw the reporters there and I heard your message to them and I contradicted it. I begged them not to use your information, and they were gentlemen and promised me not to... You are, and always have been, a silly, frivolous woman.¹¹

The scene where Mrs. Godesby and her friend bargain with Mrs. Hunter for her new Paris dresses which have become useless to her reaches the utmost in satire. The characterization of these hypocritical women in this sketch is superb. The satire continues throughout the first act, and becomes more cutting after the family is informed by their business adviser, Mr. Mason, that they are penniless. There is definite contrast between the strong and weak characters which are very well defined. Mrs. Hunter, who can approve

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 479-480.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 489-490.

of none of the suggestions that her daughters make to support themselves, remains true to her character of a social climber when she declares that marriage is the answer to their problem. To Clara she says, "I think Europe is the place for you. I don't believe all the titles are gobbled up yet."¹² The bitterest blow of all is demonstrated by the weak characters in their condemnation of the dead man who in his folly has left them to suffer in poverty and disgrace.

In The Truth (1906) which was already briefly discussed, Clyde Fitch reaches the acme of his art in satirizing society and its foibles. The Truth however, is more than satire. It is high comedy of such calibre that through it Fitch received international recognition. Mr. Quinn says:

Never before in his career did he create such vivid pictures of real people, never did he portray with such apparent simplicity the complicated motives of human conduct. Every sentence tells, every speech leads to the climax or conclusion, yet the result is the apparently effortless product of genius.¹³

The Truth brings out the genius of Fitch in the gentle treatment of a great universal evil of mankind. Mingling intimately with society, he knew well the pretentiousness, insincerity, and egoism of its members. Without preaching he unravels the pathetic story of Becky Warder, who, like her father, finds it difficult to tell the truth. She is never malicious or even deliberate in her deceit so she wins the sympathy of the audience even in the face of all her lies which are revealed in the first act. Her husband, Tom Warder, whom she loves devotedly, is the contrast of her character. He is always kind and upright in his dealings with others. When he can no longer have confidence in his wife he leaves her. Becky in despair turns to Roland,

¹² Ibid., p. 509.

¹³ Vol. I, p. 288.

her father, from whom she has learned to lie in early childhood. She is not happy with him in his miserable surroundings in a cheap boarding-house but she sees no alternative and cries out to him:

Yes, and I'll live here with you and grow dowdy and slattern, till I'm slovenly all through--body and soul! I won't care how I look or what company I keep in place of the friends who will surely drop me. I'll take up your life here and my face'll grow flabby and my heart dry and my spirits fagged, and I'll have nobody to thank for the dead end but myself.¹⁴

When her father tells her that he sent a telegram to Tom telling him to come at once that she is dying she resents his attempt to deceive her husband even though it may mean a reunion. She sees her own despicable habits mirrored in those of her father when he wishes her to feign illness.

Becky. But it seems to me as if I would be telling Tom a lie again.

Roland. Not at all. I'm telling it. And besides, doesn't the end justify the means?¹⁵

When Tom appears Becky refuses to lie further, disclosing to him the falsity of the message of her illness. She rebukes her father and through her tears Tom sees at last sincerity. He takes her to him and says to her, "We don't love people because they are perfect...We love them because they are themselves".¹⁶

In the story of Becky, Fitch sees the lies of society born of age-old conventions or pretentions. He sees in the passing of deceit from father to daughter an emblem of that continuous generation to generation regard for the ideas, shams and hypocracies of that select clique called "society". It is

¹⁴ Thomas H. Dickinson, Chief Contemporary Dramatists, Vol. I, Act III, p. 274.

¹⁵ Ibid., Act IV, p. 278.

¹⁶ p. 282.

a plea for naturalness and a democratic spirit among men.

Percy MacKaye in his Scarecrow (1909) presents a fantastic and symbolistic satire on the shams of society. Fashioning the play after Hawthorne's Feathertop he gives it a classical and historical touch. The role of the Scarecrow is a caricature of a superficial fop, the male parasite of polite society. Just as the life of the ludicrous scarecrow is sustained by a pipe so, too, are the lives of the polished "dandies" of society dependent upon the ridiculous notions of the women of the select group. Before his mirror Ravensbane sees himself in truth and cries out:

Know thy-self! Thou art--a scarecrow: A tinkling clod, a rignarole of dust, a lump of ordure, a contemptible, superfluous, inane! Haha! Hahaha! And with such scarecrows Thou dost people a planet!¹⁷

Besides the social satire of the play, MacKaye lampoons the faculty of Harvard in his satiric treatment of the Justice and dignataries of the College. They allow themselves to be outwitted by the crafty Dickon who convinces them that the Scarecrow is Lord Ravensbane.

A popular vogue for self-expression was practiced by certain members of society fifteen or twenty years ago. It aroused the satiric sense of Rachel Crothers to the extent that she showed her contempt for the superficialities of "polite society" in Expressing Willie (1924). Willie, otherwise known as Mr. Smith, an unusually successful business man, builds himself a ridiculously magnificent house on Long Island to serve as a home for himself, his mother, and his long retinue of servants. Mrs. Smith who has not changed her ideas of living as she did in a small town, finds the house empty, cold and formal. She sighs for the old comforts of home again and says, "They call

¹⁷ Montrose J. Moses, Representative American Dramas, Act IV, p. 229.

this the living-room--but nobody lives in it."¹⁸ The plot of the play is unimportant. His mother invites Minnie Whitcomb, a simple girl from the Middle West, and an old sweetheart of Willie's, to visit in order to counteract the influence of the ultra-modern friends upon Willie. At first he is ashamed of his visitor from the country but in the end is awakened to his senses. The satiric thrusts at the false aims of society are scattered throughout the play but are amplified in the conversation of the vacuous minds of these new-found friends who meet at Willie's dinner-party. They are members of a social cult who aim to express themselves openly at any cost. Willie describes them to his mother at the beginning of the play in these words: "I'm trying to explain, mother. They've had everything and they're going on after something further--that is, after something further than life as it's ordinarily understood. They're after the overtones so to speak."¹⁹ As the play progresses Willie's ideas of expressing himself change until he discovers the superficiality of his new found friends and declares himself to Minnie.

Willie. Their wings and flight mean ego--ego--ego--. They're expressing themselves--and living for themselves and getting what they want for themselves. The whole game is self.²⁰

Finally Willie is convinced that expressing one's self is not the most important and developing thing in the world, and he tells Minnie what folly self-expression is when he says to her: "...I can keep up with you. Art's all very well for a little while--but in the long run nothing matters but

¹⁸ Act I, p. 103.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 11.

²⁰ Act II, Scene ii, p. 56.

love--love, Minnie. You want something to sit by the fire with."²¹ Miss Crothers' satire is amusing and playful. Without any malice or cruelty she lightly strikes the note of condemnation at the selfishness and egoism of the aspirants to select society.

Satirical treatment of class distinction and the shams of polite society have been more popular in the earlier years of the twentieth century when living conditions were conducive to more leisure. These are not the only examples of such plays but they serve as a representation of that type which the follies of society provoke.

Since the early part of the twentieth century when viewpoints concerning the holy bonds of matrimony were fast changing a number of playwrights have been treating the subject in a satiric manner. Langdon Mitchell was one of the pioneers in the treatment of the divorce question. His popular play The New York Idea (1906) has been an inspiration to Jesse Lynch Williams, James Forbes and other playwrights of later years. It has even been considered, by some of the leading dramatic critics of our day, as comparable to the best European models. Its satiric shafts are so universal that it has been relayed to foreign countries in translated form. Frequent revivals of the play prove that it has characteristics which promise it a permanent place in the dramatic literature in spite of the fact that divorce and marital problems are commonplace today.

Since Langdon Mitchell has used marriage and divorce as his principal vehicles for setting forth his views of a modern social world, the general assumption is that the dramatist wished to satirize the divorce problems of

²¹ Act III, p. 79.

his day. Several critics have interpreted the play in this manner. Margaret Mayorga says:

The New York Idea travesties the situations made possible by the various divorce laws of the United States which show little concern for the belief that marriages are made by divine intervention of Providence.²²

If we refer to the dramatist's own statement of the purpose of the play as quoted on page 36 in the preceding chapter we will recall that his main idea was to satirize frivolity. However, since his subject is so centered upon the closely related subject of matrimony and divorce it seems best to include it in this section of our study.

Satire often reaches further than the author intended and in this case it did. Margaret Mayorga and others have read into the play more than the playwright intended but what they see is none the less true. The satiric quips of the playwright are many and varied and fall where they may. Some of the gibes are struck at religion, politics and morals.

The story centers around two divorced couples who are negotiating in second attempts at marriage. The conservative views of matrimony are exemplified in the family of one of them, Philip Phillimore, a judge. The more modern views are held by his prospective wife, Cynthia, who has just been divorced from John Karlslake who in turn is the center of attraction for Vida Phillimore, the divorced wife of Philip. The constant and surprising change of affections among them is not so amusing as is the fast, clever dialogue which runs through the whole play. A few of these lines may suggest the satiric intentions of the dramatist. Indications that divorces are to increase in the future are presented in the conversation between John and

²² A Short History of the American Drama, p. 258.

his former wife. They might well be pointing to Hollywood of the present day according to these lines:

Cynthia. There's no possible harmony between divorced people! ...But at least, my dear Karlslake, let us have some sort of beauty of behavior! If we cannot be decent, let us endeavor to be graceful. If we can't be moral, at least we can avoid being vulgar. ...If there's to be no more marriage in the world--

John. (cynical) Oh, but that's not it; there's to be more and more!

Cynthia. (with a touch of bitterness). Very well! I repeat then, if there's to be nothing but marriage and remarriage, and redi-vorce, at least, at least, those who are divorced can avoid the vulgarity of meeting each other here, there, and every-where.²³

The confusion of names is a thrust at the frivolous divorcees who almost forget who their present husband is. Such is the case of Vida when she addresses Cynthia. "My dear, I'm sorry to tell you your husband--I mean, my husband--I mean Philip wants you on the 'phone."²⁴ After Vida has been married again she exclaims, "I'm so happy! ...Just think of the silly people, dear, that only have this sensation once in a lifetime!"²⁵ Vida's newly acquired husband is a much coveted lord who is the mouthpiece of the author in his criticism of frivolous Americans. Just before his marriage Lord Wilfrid has declared his love to Cynthia who rebukes him. "You propose to me here, at a moment like this? When I'm on the last lap--just in sight of the goal--the gallows--the halter--the altar, I don't know what its name is! No, I won't have you!"²⁶ Nevertheless she goes to the races with him regard-

²³ Halline, Op. Cit., Act II, pp. 485-486.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 487.

²⁵ Act IV, p. 506.

²⁶ Act III, p. 498.

less of the fact that she is to be married to Philip in an hour or so, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Of course she is thoughtful enough of her future husband to notify him that the wedding will have to be postponed until ten o'clock at night. When she arrives just in time her brother-in-law, Sudley, remarks: "My dear young lady: You come here, to this sacred--eh--eh--spot --altar! (gestures) odoriferous of the paddock!"²⁷ The comparison well signifies the author's intimations.

The whole play is so satirical that significant lines might be quoted from random but there are other plays to discuss so we will have to conclude with a few lines which contain the gist of Mitchell's theme. The first lines are thrust at childless marriages and those which bear little fruit.

John. ...American marriage is a new thing. We've got to strike the pace, and the only trouble is, Judge, that the judiciary have so messed the thing up that a man can't be sure he is married until he's divorced. It's a sort of marry-go-round, to be sure! ...we're ready to marry my wife to you, and start her on her way to him!

Philip. Good Lord! Sir, you cannot trifle with monogamy!

John. Now, now, Judge, monogamy is just as extinct as knee-breeches. The new woman has a new idea, and the new idea is--well, it's just the opposite of the old Mormon one. Their idea is one man, ten wives and a hundred children. Our idea is one woman, a hundred husbands and one child.²⁸

A little later John is talking to Cynthia. He speaks: "I begin to understand our American women now. Fire-flies--and the fire they gleam with is so cold that a midge couldn't warm his heart at it, let alone a man. You're not of the same race as man. You married me for nothing, divorced me for

²⁷ Act III, p. 492.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 493.

nothing because you are nothing."²⁹

No play similar to this again appeared until Jesse Lynch Williams introduced his Why Marry? in 1917. It is generally believed he conceived at least some of his ideas from Mr. Mitchell's The New York Idea which was mis-named. It should have been American instead of New York since the idea is not confined to one locality. Why Marry? differs greatly in its carefree manner from Mitchell's play which is decidedly in the comedy of manners style. The former play is the stronger of the two, however, because Williams has too often forced a laugh from his audience regardless of how true his ideas are.

The title Why Marry? is somewhat misleading. It may suggest an attack upon that human institution of marriage but this is not the sole purpose of the play; rather it is an attempt to scrutinize closely the marriage state. It has very little plot being more like a discussion of matrimony by various members of a family some of whom believe in marriage and divorce while the others do not. The discussion of matrimony is centered upon Helen, a young woman, an assistant to a scientist who is about to leave for Paris on a research expedition. Helen shocks the family by declaring her intentions to go with the young man but not as his wife. She does not believe in matrimony; it ruins careers, she claims. The orthodox members of her family have tried to encourage the marriage of her younger sister to a worthless young man who is the son of a very wealthy and influential neighbor. Numerous insinuations are flung from both sides of the question of matrimony. Even the church which sanctifies marriage receives biting censorship. Woman's place and women in careers are likewise open to criticism. Although both sides of

²⁹
Ibid., p. 500.

the question are treated it seems that Helen, who is the voice of new and sane views on the subject of marriage, triumphs.

Jean who is the little sister scarcely knows her own mind. She has just become engaged to Rex, the libertine, not because she loves him but because she has been brought up to get married. She is not prepared to do anything else. She represents the old conventional attitude toward marriage. Helen tries to make her see the folly of her choice by telling her not to marry him unless she can't get along without him. Jean responds:

Jean. ...Well...how can I live without him--without some man? You can support yourself. I can't.

Helen. But you wouldn't live on a man you didn't really love!

Jean. Why not? Lucy does; most wives live on men they don't really love. To stop doing so and get divorced is wrong you know.³⁰

When Helen threatens to follow Ernest without being united to him in wedlock, her brother, John, who is on the side of conventional marriage, rebukes her and she responds:

Helen. ...If I sold myself as you are forcing little Jean to do, to a libertine she does not love, who does not love her--that is not sin! ...that is holy matrimony. But to give yourself of your own free will to the man you love and trust and can help, the man who loves and needs and has won the right to have you--oh, if this is sin, then let me die a sinner.³¹

Jean, the emblem of innocence and resignation to tradition asks cousin Theodore, the bishop, to solemnize her union with Rex.

Theodore. Not unless you truly love each other. Marriage is sacred.

Jean. A large church wedding--that will make it sacred. A full choral service--many expensive flowers--all the smartest people invited--that always makes the union of two souls sacred.³²

³⁰ Kathryn Coe and William H. Cordell, The Pulitzer Prize Plays, Act I, pp. 8-9.

³¹ Ibid., Act II, p. 38.

³² Act III, p. 41

The unmerciful sting of the satire penetrates so deeply into the heart of matrimony that it stirs up doubt as to the importance of the traditional regard for marriage. Mr. Lawrence Gilman in criticizing the play, in a periodical at the time the play was produced, describes very explicitly what he believed the playwright intended to say through the words of his characters.

Mr. Williams has written a play about marriage, a play that exhibits marriage as the various kinds of failure it is likely to be: Marriage as degrading sensual bondage; marriage as a barter of commercial and social values; marriage as respectable wretchedness for the indigent, ordered but not paid for by society; marriage as an old friend, "legalized prostitution", marriage as penalty; marriage as a mandate dictated but not read: Marriage briefly, as the institution which, so Mr. Nat Goodwin says in the play, is doomed, unless we all do something about it.³³

Realizing the potency of the satire Mr. Gilman believes that the play would be one of the greatest of its kind if it were not lacking in one quality.

His words follow:

But if Mr. Williams is strong in the language of satire he is weak in the language of feeling...if he had been as scrupulous and vigilant in his expression of feeling as he is shrewd and delightful in his manipulation of comedy, Mr. Williams might have given us, if not (as we have been told) "the most intelligent and searching satire on social institutions ever written by an American", at least a satire of uncommon point and distinction.³⁴

If Williams did fail in giving the necessary quality of feeling he at least met the approval of the judges who believed his play the best of those produced in 1917-18 and bestowed upon him the Pulitzer Prize for his Why Marry? Other critics have considered it comparable to George Bernard Shaw's Getting Married. Whether or not Mr. Williams had been inspired by Mr. Shaw we do not know, but we do know that his play is typically American from the core to the skin.

³³"Drama and Music", North American Review, February, 1918, p. 280.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 280-281.

Why Not? (1922) a sequel to Why Marry?, carried the keynote of The New York Idea to the extreme but it was not so successful as either of the other two plays. It embodies a sharp satirical touch in the exchange of parents. The children agree to such a change to assure themselves of a happy home. The play did not receive the praise that its sister-piece did and it would be forgotten today but for the likeness of the names of the two plays.

Another play, The Changelings (1923) written by Lee Wilson Dodd, deals with the same subject but it has the happy ending of the return of parents to their rightful mates thus making too obvious the satirical slant. Like Why Not? it was soon relegated to the realm of forgotten things.

Although Thompson Buchanan wrote A Woman's Way in 1909 it seems to have a tang of today about it. It belongs to the comedy of smart people, with interesting character study added. The play is centered about a young woman who averts her own divorce by cleverly handling the other woman. There is no pointed message to the play but it contains many thrusts at matrimonial mistakes and divorce. Marion Stanton represents the new and broader opinion of marriage and its consequences, while her mother is the emblem of the older conventional stand on the subject. A snatch of their conversation concerning the automobile accident which featured her husband's name in connection with that of a charming Southern widow, will serve to illustrate the contrast between the two women. Her mother speaks first.

Mrs. Livingstone. ...You can't live with him after this scandal--consider your dignity! It's scarcely proper.

Marion. Mother, dear, it's time to end this hypocrisy that is merely a confession of weakness. It's time I tell you, for the good women to wake up. We fight to get our husbands--why not fight to hold them? We good women are too fond of sitting still and pretending to be coldly superior while our hearts break as the other women steal our husbands.³⁵

Marion's method of holding her husband in this case was to give a dinner-party for his friend. The result was that all of the men invited knew "Puss" too well, and Howard, disgusted with his friend, asked Marion to take him back. She says, "Take you back? Why, I've never even given you up. Do you think I could stand for that cat--Puss, I mean--in this house and me off in Paris?"³⁶ The chief satire of the play is directed against philandering men. Marion, however, in the role of the childless wife, is also satirized when Stanton is trying to explain to Morris why he and Marion have come to a breach. He says, "It might have been all right with a little place in the country and a couple of kids, but dad's money and Marion's health killed that. Then she went in for society and culture on the side."³⁷ The satiric note is never forced or didactic throughout the whole play. It seems to be harmoniously blended into the natural and easy flowing dialogue.

Frank Craven's First Year (1921) achieved one of the longest theatrical runs ever accorded a play. Perhaps it was the after-the-war attitude of a people anxious for a smug and peaceful living at any cost which drew a full house to see the play for seven hundred and sixty performances. Frank Craven in his inimitable, droll characterization of the husband in no small way added to the popularity of the play.

It is that type of play which was cited before as having more than one possibility of interpretation. It depends through which lens one sees the play. Mr. Joseph Wood Krutch, a reliable and very capable dramatic critic, points out that we have to recall the economic conditions of that period if we wish to understand the reception given such a play. This is what he says:

³⁶ Act III, p. 158.

³⁷ Act I, p. 15.

All this, it must be remembered, took place in the days when depressions were still assumed to be impossible and the general public, far from concerning itself with the social meaning of any business enterprise, regarded "success" as the duty of all up-standing young men and the "big deal" as the highest form of human activity.³⁸

Looking at the play through bi-focals today we not only see the inevitable struggle of a young couple trying to adjust their lives to each other during the first year of married life and we laugh at their petty quarrels and rejoice with them when they mount the road to success; but we also see the satirical bent in the return of a wife to her husband's house when he can offer her a luxurious living. We can also see the husband in his role of a crafty cheat who takes advantage of a situation to extract an unreasonable sum from a large corporation to further his own interests. "Get-rich-quick" was the after-the-war motto. The means was not important.

Some time after the war the plays satirizing married life and divorce became less popular. Public opinion had taken a stand on the subject and the question of marital difficulty was left to the individuals to solve as they saw fit.

Two other phases of social satire which are closely related to the problems of married life are the family relationships and the conflict of the sexes. The first question deals with the dissension or revolt of various members of the family as, parents and children, father and daughter, mother and son as well as the husband and wife.

One of the earliest and most striking examples of this type of criticism appears after the war when women who had learned to take man's place, became unbound and began to express themselves freely by throwing off the shackles of age-old tyranny. The Famous Mrs. Fair (1919) as visualized by James

Forbes introduced the vogue. It was contagious. Children quickly adapted themselves to free action and revolt. We shall have to turn back to the early post-war days to appreciate the sharp criticism brought upon women who sought careers to the neglect of their families.

In dealing with Mrs. Fair, Mr. Forbes presents a character satire rather than a caricature. Mrs. Fair who was a major in a reconstruction unit abroad during the World War won a medal for bravery. Associated with the project of entertaining "the dough boys" in France he had first hand information on the subject of which he writes. He knew more than one Mrs. Fair of his day just as Chaucer and others before him knew well the theme of defeated glory.

Although the subject matter and the dialogue of the play is definitely dated, the idea is interesting for historic records. Jeffrey, the neglected husband, speaks the keynote of the play in terse words to his son and daughter when his wife is negotiating with some gentlemen concerning a contract to tour the country in a lecture series.

Jeffrey. Where's your mother?

Sylvia. In the garden, being photographed.

Jeffrey. Again?

Alan. What's the idea this time?

Sylvia. It's for a magazine article showing her domestic side.

Jeffrey. I hope the camera can find it.³⁹

An ironic treatment of the relationship between a not too bright daughter and her struggling, hopeful mother, who tries to find in her off-spring the defeated ambitions of her own girlhood, is the theme of Detour (1921).

³⁹Op. Cit., Act II, p. 395.

Mr. Owen Davis, the playwright was elected to membership in the National Institute of Arts and Letters in recognition of the merits of this play. Icebound gave him the Pulitzer award for the year 1922-1923. These plays are a definite departure from his old melodramatic Nellie, the Beautiful Cloak Model type and cannot be associated with his prolific writings of the days of theatrical thrills.

His story of farm life in Detour is ironically bitter. The character of Helen Hardy is a poignant picture of one who struggles and rebels, being frustrated by fate which asserts itself in the dull, stodginess of a husband who has transmitted similar characteristics to his listless daughter. This is irony which goes beyond the circle of humor and rests on the ridge of despair. The only quality which saves the story from being true tragedy is the eternal hope that springs from Helen's breast. At the close of the play when she and her husband look out the window and see Kate and Tom together in embrace about to begin a drab life like their parents, she thinks of a possible granddaughter in whom she might fulfill her own yearning for self-expression. Steve remarks that if they have a grandchild he hopes it will be a girl because they are easier to manage. Helen replies, "Another girl! Life sort of keeps on goin' on forever, don't it?"⁴⁰

Anna Christie is another ironical play which presents strained family relationships. Eugene O'Neill received the Pulitzer Prize of the year 1921-1922 for this play. The quoted lines are taken from The Pulitzer Prize Plays. As to what the main theme of the play is, no one seems to agree. O'Neill has dropped the final curtain on an indeterminate note when he puts these

⁴⁰ Ibid., The Detour, Act III, p. 526.

words in the old Swede's mouth. "Fog, fog, fog, all bloody time. You can't see where you was going, no. Only dat ole daval, sea--she knows."⁴¹ Indeed it must have been in a fog of fear that old Chris Christopher sent his daughter away from the devastating influence of "dat ole daval, sea" to be properly reared on a farm in Minnesota. Ironically enough it is to the sea she returned at twenty, to seek respite from the inland life which led to her downfall. She turns upon her father and blames him for what she is in these words,

Your bunk about the farm being so fine! Didn't I write you year after year how rotten it was and what a dirty slave them cousins made of me! What'd you care? Nothing! Not even enough to come out and see me! That crazy bull about wanting to keep me away from the sea don't go down with me! You yust didn't want to be bothered with me! You're like all the rest of 'em.⁴²

O'Neill seems to have borrowed Ibsen's sins of the father theme. Must the child be the victim of the indiscretions of the parents? Anna is the mouth-piece of O'Neill's bitter irony. She is struggling against fate but toward what end? Will she conquer? The burning question of mankind fighting fate is only partially answered in the words of Anna when her father returns to forgive her for her past indiscretions. Changing her opinion of her father she replies,

Don't bawl about it. There ain't nothing to forgive, anyway. It ain't your fault, and it ain't mine, and it ain't his neither. We're all poor nuts, and things happen, and we yust get mixed in wrong, that's all.⁴³

Shall fate in the guise of the sea continue to play havoc with a character once defeated by circumstances? O'Neill did not attempt the answer but let

⁴¹ Act IV, p. 189.

⁴² Ibid., Act III, pp. 178-179.

⁴³ Ibid., Act IV, p. 182.

the hated sea wrap them all together to explore into its devilish "ole" depths. The play is one of O'Neill's earlier ones and shows his philosophical searching, his attitude at that time of an acceptance of the irony of fate.

In Craig's Wife we find family dissension existing between a woman who married a house not a home, a fetish not a husband. It is another character study treated satirically. Strangely enough George Kelly also won the Pulitzer Prize of the year 1925-1926 with this play. I have not chosen the representative plays for this section of my chapter on social satire from only the Pulitzer Prize list. It so happened, however, that several of those selected are award plays which may be an indication that the critical or satirical play can also be fine drama.

Mrs. Craig is an unbearable creature who makes everyone, even guests, very uncomfortable in her house. She does not allow anyone to smoke, she frets over a few particles of dust, and loses her temper completely if anything is out of order. Her constant henpecking eventually estranges not only her husband and his aunt, but her own niece, and finally her servants. No one can live in the same house with her. The following account is given of her by Mr. J. Vandervoot Sloan, in Drama, a monthly magazine devoted to the interest of the theatre.

At the end of the play she is left "a lone and solitary pyre" save for the sympathy of a neighbor whom she has snubbed here-to-fore. I had great sympathy for Mrs. Craig, in this last scene, despite the fact that she had been a liar, and a snake. This sympathy was not motivated so much by the fact that she had been deserted, as it was by the realization that she would continue to be in her future contacts with life, the same woman she had been.⁴⁴

⁴⁴
p. 172.

A few lines from the play will identify Mrs. Craig's character but the whole play reeks so with her nastiness that it is difficult to show in a few given lines all of her despicable ways. As to her fetish of keeping the house in perfect order these lines will, I believe, best identify that idiosyncrasy of hers.

Mrs. Craig. ...Don't lean against that piano that way, Walter, you might scratch it.

Mr. Craig. My coat won't scratch it.

Mrs. Craig. Well, there might be something in your pocket that will. Now sit up. Sit over there.⁴⁵

Instead of appreciation for the roses a neighbor sent her she offers complaint to her housekeeper who wishes to know where to place the flowers.

Mrs. Craig responds, "Well you'd better take them out of here, Mrs. Harold: the petals will be all over the room."⁴⁶ Walter's aunt, Miss Austen, is the mouthpiece for the playwright. In the first act she forewarns us of Mrs. Craig's inevitable doom. Miss Austen dares to advise her nephew's wife:

You want your house, Harriet, and that's all you want. And that's all you'll have, at the finish, unless you change your way. People who live to themselves, Harriet, are generally left to themselves; for other people will not go on being made miserable indefinitely for the sake of house furnishings.⁴⁷

The satire is another of the particular character type but when Craig's ire is aroused intensely he suddenly becomes bold and the satire becomes more general. He says, "What have you ever done, or a million others like

⁴⁵George Kelly, Craig's Wife, Act I, p. 31.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 22.

⁴⁷p. 50.

you, that would warrant the assumption of such superiority over the men you're married to?"⁴⁸ Mrs. Craig is unique in the sum total of her characteristics but more specifically she is just Rip's wife or possibly the husband in Somerset Maugham's The Circle.

Mr. Frank Hurburt O'Hara in his most recent book on American drama classifies this play under the heading "Comedies Without a Laugh" but he says it skirts tragedy because the wife is left alone and will probably remain alone. His comment on the play has a more hopeful outlook in the end than other critics have given it. The following paragraph will explain:

True, Harriet is defeated; but the mood of her defeat is not the mood of grandeur such as rises from the defeat of great characters; it is the mood of futility which follows the raveling-out of mediocrity. Nor does Harriet Craig's defeat dominate the play. The play is dominated by Walter Craig's escape. The end of the action may be indeterminate, but Walter's character gives a hint--even an assurance--for tomorrow. The playwright has not been afraid to look "realistically" at a type of woman who threatens the success of matrimony.⁴⁹

There is one other type of family relationship which we have not yet considered. It is the deadliest of all and is portrayed in Sidney Howard's Silver Cord (1926). He satirizes the mother who is so insanely jealous of her sons that she wants them all to herself. Mr. Barrett H. Clark in writing a criticism of the play comments very openly on the nature of such a family relationship. The following words are quoted from his article called "Broadway Censorship".

It is not strange that our unofficial censor has overlooked Sidney Howard's latest play, The Silver Cord, because Mr. Howard's sinister immorality isn't quite so near the surface as the sort of thing the police can understand. The Silver Cord is a full-length picture of a woman who over does the business of being a mother.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Act II, p. 113.

⁴⁹ Today in American Drama, pp. 82-83.

⁵⁰ The Drama, Vol. XVII, (March, 1927), p. 171.

At the time the drama was presented, Joseph Wood Krutch had nothing but praise for the play and the playwright. He said:

No subject is more delicate and no subject more commonly held too sacred for examination than the subject of mother love. Yet so skillfully has Mr. Howard conducted his argument and so clearly has he defined the limits of his thesis that even moderately robust spirits will find the piece absorbing rather than offensive.⁵¹

The Silver Cord differs from most of the recent plays in its long speeches which contain much of the satire and irony of the play.

Cristina, the wife of Mrs. Phelps' elder son, David, is the mouthpiece of Sidney Howard. At times in the lengthy indictments of her mother-in-law, Christina's words approach invective. Openly the younger woman flays the despicable class of women who call themselves mothers. Mrs. Phelps, unlike George Kelly's Mrs. Craig, is throughout the play a character study of not an eccentric individual but of a group. Unfortunately Mrs. Phelps is representative of a class of morally deficient and selfish mothers about whom Christina cries out:

...every accusation I make is true! You belong to a type that's very common in these days, Mrs. Phelps--a type of self centered, self pitying, son-devouring tigress.....
Oh, there are normal mothers around: mothers who want their children to be men and women and take care of themselves; mothers who are people, too, and don't have to be afraid of loneliness after they've outlived their motherhood; mothers who look on their children as people and enjoy them as people and not be forever holding on to them and pawing them and fussing about their health and singing them lullabies and tucking them up as though they were everlasting babies. But you're not one of the normal ones, Mrs. Phelps! --You and your kind beat any cannibals I've ever heard of! And what makes you doubly deadly and dangerous is that people admire you and your kind. They actually admire you! You professional Mothers! ...You see, I'm taking this differently from that poor child upstairs. She's luckier than I am, too. She isn't married to one of your sons. Do you remember what she said about children yesterday? "Have 'em. Love 'em. And leave 'em be."⁵²

⁵¹"Drama", The Nation, Jan. 5, 1927, p. 21.

⁵²Charles H. Whitman, Representative Modern Dramas, Act III, pp. 907-8.

The most cutting satire is found in the sentence Robert receives; that of being bound to his mother with a cord of her selfishness. There is only one ray of hope for him in her death. While she lives he is as bound to her as Charlie is in O'Neill's Strange Interlude. The bitterest irony is found in Mrs. Phelps' last words when she takes Robert to her bosom and cries:

And you must remember what David, in his blindness, has forgotten. That mother love suffereth long and is kind; envieth not, is not puffed up, is not easily provoked; beareth all things; believeth all things; hopeth all things; endureth all things...At least, I think my love does!⁵³

There have been numerous and varied treatments of the subject of family relationships but the foregoing examples are among the most striking.

The conflict of the sexes and the double standard of morality have been subject matter for satirists since the days of the old classical drama. William Dean Howells was not a pioneer in reviewing women's weaknesses nor was Mrs. Mowatt in Fashion. Chaucer's portrait of the Wife of Bath is a much more comprehensive and composite picture of the frailties and imperfections of women.

In 1889 Mr. Howells struck a timely subject with which to expose the folly and timidity of women in his Mouse-Trap. There is little or no plot in this amusing and quaint little farce. It is written in a continuous flow of conversation between a very charming widow and a Mr. Campbell who aspires to her hand. In the beginning they are engrossed in an argument over Woman's Suffrage. To prove that woman is the weaker sex he constructs in his mind a plan of test. It is an imaginary mouse to which he suddenly points. The scene with Mrs. Somers balancing herself upon a chair until the end of the piece is very amusing and cutting. It is especially so when some ladies call

⁵³ Ibid., Act III, p. 910.

and the whole group are in consternation holding their skirts and seeking perches upon which to protect themselves. The situation seems very far-fetched, as does the dialogue, to present day readers but it symbolizes woman's dependency upon man before she had the ballot and it is therefore an interesting record of the past. The ridiculousness of woman's fear of a mouse is emphasized in these words when Mr. Campbell tries to convince the women that there was no mouse.

Mr. Campbell. ...The mouse is gone long ago. And if it was here, it wouldn't bite you.

Mrs. Roberts. Bite? Do you suppose I care for a mouse's biting, Willis? I wouldn't care for the bite of an elephant. It's the idea. Can't you understand?⁵⁴

Dulcy is a picture painted by Marc Connelly and George S. Kaufman from a bromidic character taken from a newspaper column. It is a caricature of a senseless woman who uses stock phrases and tries to be an advance agent for her husband's business. Although Dulcy portrays a stereotyped and stupid woman, she has no characteristics which could not well be transferred to men of the same type. This play, according to Mr. Krutch, marks a new point of view in dramatic presentation. He refers to this in his recent book already quoted.

By 1920, ridicule of provincialism, middle-class morality and the gospel of success was beginning to play a large part in the work of younger non-dramatic writers and Dulcy (1921) served not only to draw conspicuous attention to Marc Connelly and George Kaufman, but also to introduce something novel on the stage even though less so in other literary forms -- satire from a point of view rather than universal in its appeal.⁵⁵

An interesting note to observe is the sarcasm of the playwrights in the explanation they add to some of the lines lest the point may be missed. It

⁵⁴ Part III, p. 122.

⁵⁵ Op. Cit., p. 136.

follows one of Dulcy's stored-up phrases when Gordon has announced that he has invited a business friend of his to stay for dinner.

Dulcy. (none too pleased, particularly about being a friend of Angela's) Oh! So you're a friend of Angela's--that's lovely! Yes, you must stay!...Just take pot luck with us, Mr. Sterrett. I always say that anyone can drop in--I think that's the nicest kind of a household don't you? (This one is No. 213, Series L, but Dulcy utters it as though no one had ever thought of such a thing before).⁵⁶

Scarcely does Dulcy speak but she says "Business before pleasure", "Every cloud has a silver lining", New York is a wonderful place to visit but I wouldn't like to live there", or "two's company--" and other well known and battered phrases which are of course well selected and distributed through the play.

The most daring and devastating indiotment of women or a certain group of them was pronounced by a woman, Clare Boothe, in The Women, a farce comedy based on stark realism. It brought about a storm of protest not only from women but from men alike because it was at once believed to be a picture of women in general. But in her preface to the written play Miss Boothe contradicts this erroneous interpretation of the play. First of all she says, "The Women is a satirical play about a numerically small group of ladies native to Park Avenues of America."⁵⁷ In a personal remark she defends herself against the complaint made by Heywood Broun and other critics who believed that it "not only desecrated womankind but that it degraded the whole human race".⁵⁸ This following exerpt explains her attitude toward the play:

⁵⁶ Montrose Moses, Op. Cit., Act I, p. 539.

⁵⁷ p. vii.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. vii.

...none of my friends is like that--few of my acquaintances. But such mischievous women have crossed my path, as Hedda Gabler must have crossed Ibsen's and recently, Mary Tilford crossed Lillian Hellman's in The Children's Hour. ...I did not like these women. ...But whether or not it is a true portrait of such women is a matter which no man can adequately judge, for the good reason that all their actions and emotions are shown forth in places and times which no man has ever witnessed.⁵⁹

The play has little plot. It is a series of pictures of women in their various sanctums where they are seen as gossips, slanderers and hypocrites. Miss Boothe gives a list of seventy-eight adjectives by which these women have been called by critics and other men who commented on the production. Here are just a few of them: cobras, hell-cats, zoological freaks, lewd hussies, jakes, Trollopes, fiendish liars, gossip peddlers, venomous and murderous. The scenes, some of which are a fitting-room, an exercise room, a hospital room, a Reno hotel room and a beauty shop, are knit together by the story of a sweet but rather dull Mary Haines who loves her husband and is faithful to him. Through the gossip of the women she almost loses him. However, in the end she is triumphant. The happy ending in so modern a play is only acceptable in that the slaying of such detestable women is inevitable. To choose lines from the piece is difficult because the whole play is made up of witty dialogue, with fast repartee, that best fits the setting in which it is used. After Mary returns from Reno and is restored to her home and husband she shows signs of having become more enlightened since her conquest over the women who tried to rob her of her husband. Edith tells Mary that Sylvia is going to a psycho-analyst.

Mary. As if any woman need go to a psycho-analyst to find out she can't trust women.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. vii-ix.

Edith. Mary, you've grown awfully hard since you deserted your old friends.

Mary. Isn't "wise" the word? I'm beginning to understand women.⁶⁰

The form of satire is not easy to classify; it is now ironical, now burlesque and again it seems to be most caustic invective.

Women seem to be ridiculed upon the stage more than the men but the men have also received a share in satirical writing of the conflict of the sexes. George Kelly has given a humorous and hearty character study of the type of man that we have all seen in social gatherings, in business or even in the corner drug store. The Show-Off, however, is more than a character satire. It lampoons the colorlessness of life in West Philadelphia so realistically, that it may well represent prosaic suburban life of almost any city.

Underneath the great "gas-bag", Aubrey, there is a universal and rich vein of satire. He is not only an inhabitant of West Philadelphia but more of a world character, ironically humorous in his hackneyed and archaic language which is nothing but the outward sign of deep universal truths. Montrose Moses in his introduction to the play gives us in a few words what he believes lies under the humor of the play.

In the "Show-Off" Piper is the central point; while the whole play is a transcript of life--the author would have it so--this life acts and reacts and is acted upon by the presence of the big bluff who talks "bunk". We laugh at him, but he is one of the tragedies of the democratic idea; we get to like Aubrey, but he is still the menace that comes out of a mediocre education; he wins out in the end, through his characteristic bluff, and in his successful issue there is a whole commentary on American life. It is monumentally splendid, this irony of Kelly, an irony that holds through the characteristically American good-humored way we have of laughing at our own foibles, and of believing they are the other fellow's.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Act III, Scene 2, pp. 176-177.

⁶¹ Op. Cit., p. 612.

Notwithstanding this deeper meaning of the play, Aubrey is the counterpart of that harmless braggadocio who blusters into our life only too frequently among the men we have known.

To the Ladies (1922) presents another unfavorable picture of a certain type of man, a weak, incompetent "boob" who succeeds through the efforts of someone else. In this case it is his wife who on the other hand is clever enough to aid him into making a direct impression on his employer. We shall become better acquainted with him in the fourth chapter.

Margaret Fleming (1890) was one of the early modern American plays to deal with the duel of the sexes. The story, that of the innocent wife of an unfaithful husband, is in real life as old as mankind, but when James A. Herne presented it to theatrical managers they refused it because of its stark realism. It was too far ahead of its time for popular approval. Herne, undaunted, hired a small auditorium and ran the play for three weeks. Incidentally, he thereby introduced the little theatre movement in America.

The play is a character study of a remarkable woman, a picture of nobility inherent in the cultured women of America. Her husband is cast as a direct contrast to her; a contrast between character and personality. The question of double moral standard is present but not pronounced. The satirical slant is such that it does not take sides but throws the blame of sin upon both guilty individuals, as suggested in the death-bed letter of Lena Schmidt who admitted that she knew Philip never loved her--it was all her fault. Margaret is nobly portrayed in the role of second mother to her husband's child after the mother, Lena, dies. Her advice to Philip to care for his child is an implication of man's responsibility to his children and the exoneration of woman as the sole caretaker of her off-spring.

Margaret. Give him a name, educate him. Try to make atonement for the wrong you did his mother. You must teach him never to be ashamed of her, to love her memory--motherhood is a divine thing--remember that, Philip, no matter when, or how. You can do fine things for this unfortunate child.⁶²

Barry shows the sane way to look upon that which is done. He ennobles the task of caring for innocent and helpless children born out of wedlock by placing the responsibility chiefly on the shoulders of the wronged wife.

Margaret tells Philip it is no use to lament or give up but assures him her help.

Margaret. The past is dead. We must face the living future. Now Philip, there are big things ahead for you, if you will only look for them. They certainly will not come to you. I will help you--we will fight this together.⁶³

Marion's role in Thompson Buchanan's A Woman's Way (1915), was reproduced in 1927 in Philip Barry's Paris Bound. The plot and settings, however, are quite different but the message is the same: marriage vs. divorce, with marriage triumphant. The satiric thrust is not at philandering but at the double standard idea which has long been a much debated subject. Marion's departure from ethical propriety is made to balance her husband's greater transgression. Mr. Krutch reminds us that even the audience of today is still inclined to forgive the man and blame the woman. Even though they know that theoretically sin is no worse for man than woman they prefer to let it rest in theory only. He continues:

Undoubtedly sauce for the goose is equally well suited for the gander, but most audiences still shrink a little from seeing the recipe tried. Woman are free and the "single standard" has been established, but Mr.

⁶² Arthur Hobson Quinn, Representative American Plays, Act IV, p. 544.

⁶³ Ibid.

Barry is a shrewd enough judge of popular feeling to make a wife's stolen kiss beside the piano roughly equivalent in the play to a husband's two weeks' a deux in the mountains.⁶⁴

With Paris Bound we will conclude our survey of the social satires not because we have exhausted the plays of this type but because our choice seems to represent sufficiently the satirical plays of social and domestic life.

⁶⁴"A School for Wives", The Nation, Jan. 18, 1928, p. 75.

THE SATIRE OF PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

CHAPTER III

Public institutions like politics, the theatre and religion have received more than passing interest for the satirist. Frances T. Russel says:

Satire, being frankly a destructive process, makes no pretense of supplementing its iconoclasm by reconstruction. But such implication of reform as may lurk in the criticism that paves the way may be looked for more assuredly than elsewhere in attack on institutions.¹

Sometimes the satirists are curbed by the controlling powers of government or the church, especially in the field of drama when certain plays have not met the approval of boards of censorship. Such control has in some instances spurred the satirical minded dramatist on to clothe his ideas in a more subtle form of satire which only the thinking masses may appreciate. Sometimes they have been so unrestricted that jolly burlesques and caricatures have come from the pens of humorous playwrights.

Political satires have always been popular. Our own history of American drama is well represented by political dramas from the time Mercy Otis Warren wrote her well known satires until the present day. The political satires of the modern era in American drama began with the famous Mulligan Guard series of Edward Harrigan, the comedian. The Mulligan Guard Nominee (1880) is the most representative of the series since it is a satire on the politics of the day. It is also a criticism of woman's organizations. They play centers around local politics and the manner in which elections are fought, not conducted. It contains a little foreign intrigue by implying that the British are spying upon our American citizens to determine just how much interest the Americans show for the Irish problem of freedom. The play

¹Op. Cit., p. 226.

is a caricature or cartoon type, especially in its exaggeration of the stage Irishman. Regardless of its farcical nature it is very amusing and contains some interesting history of ward politics in New York City in the eighties.

A Texas Steer (1894) is one of the most important political satires ever written in the United States. It deals with the problem of national politics, and seems to be not far separated from our more recent political plays in both form and content. On the title page of the play, A Texas Steer or Money Makes the Mare Go, is a brief explanation of what Charles Hoyt attempted to do in writing this play.

"A Texas Steer" is a collection of saws and instances supposed to bear more or less directly upon the extraordinary possibility of American politics, and the development of statesmanship of the average type. The author does not claim that his treatment of the subject is exhaustive and profound; he will not insist that it is absolutely truthful, but he hopes that, as far as it goes, it will be found amusing.

The play is completely reproduced in Moses' Representative American Plays already cited and the lines quoted are taken from the same source. While the play is centered upon political antics in Washington, it also has some social satire and a generous dose of moralizing, typical of the later nineteenth century plays. The works of Hoyt are of very little literary value but they abound in satire. After Fitch, he ranks as the outstanding dramatic satirist of his age. His interests were not confined to politics but he treated any subject of timely interest in a satirical manner with emphasis on the humorous side.

Mr. Hoyt flings his political satire into the very title of his play, A Texas Steer, a comedy travesty on a Congressman from Texas who is very genial but not too capable. The opening lines of the play explain the subtitle, Money Makes the Mare Go. Two colored field hands open the dialogue. Crab, one of them, is running and shouting the good news about his master,

Mr. Brander, the Texas steer.

Crab. (excited). Mars. Brander's elected shuah! Can't be no possible doubt of it! I voted for him!

Mink. Huh! 'Spose you tink yo' vote elected him. How much did yo' get fo' votin' fo' him?

Crab. I got five dollars. How much did yo' get?²

Mr. Brander is elected and goes to Washington where the real fun begins. The new life proves too strenuous and complex for a simple man from a cattle ranch. His wife and daughter in their efforts to get into society furnish the material for social satire. During the first few hours after his arrival Brander has various callers; especially one Mr. Innitt who applies for the position of private secretary to the congressman. Innitt offers to show him all the night spots and see him home safely in the morning. Indignantly Brander tells him that he came for business. In this scene the cattle king is enlightened as to how he must conduct himself as a congressman.

Innitt. ...I know all the lobbyists and can arrange all your business with them. Why, I've no doubt I could get you five thousand dollars for advocating the land-grant for the Northern Texas Transportation Co. They're here with lots of money to get the bill through.

Brander. And do you think I'd support that bill? Why, it's an infernal robbery of the settlers!

Innitt. Oh, well! What of that? (You get your five thousand dollars, don't you?) You are too sensitive Mr. Brander. You won't give a thought to such trifles as that after you've been in Congress a session.³

When Brander explains that the passage of the bill would rob him of eighty thousand acres Innitt agrees that by all means he should make every effort

² Representative American Plays, Op. Cit., Act I, p. 11.

³ Ibid., p. 22.

to have the bill suppressed and he adds:

Innitt. ...Of course you'll make a speech!

Brander. Me make a speech! Well, if I could I would; but I couldn't get up a speech to save my life.

Innitt. My dear sir, nobody expects you to. All you've got to do is stand up and read one.

Brander. Well, I've got to have it written.

Innitt. Of course; but what's your private secretary for--if he doesn't write your speeches for you? It's not the gift of eloquence but a good private secretary that makes the orator.³

Political satires suffered a decline during the early years of the twentieth century just as the whole bulwark of American drama did at that time. Satire does not mix well with the melodramatic and sentimental type of plays which were in vogue during that period. The playwrights of the early post-war period were concerned with bigger problems that came out of the war than political bickering and dissension. It was not until after the crash of the stock-market that the American people necessarily became political minded. A number of dramatists in fast succession following the example of Kaufman and Ryskind, took up the satiric whip and began to lash political folly in a more explicit and daring manner than ever before.

In a sort of crazy-quilt pattern of burlesque, farce, travesty, and musical extravaganza with a hint toward Gilbert and Sullivan, George S. Kaufman and Morris Ryskind attempted to expose some of the evils and deficiencies of national politics. They have gone much further than Hoyt in their audacity of presenting the Republican National Committee drinking whiskey in a hotel bedroom immediately after selecting a candidate for the office of president. Hoyt, in his day, appeared to be daring enough when he exposed the manner of

³
Ibid., p. 22.

choosing a representative to Congress in a backwoods state.

This play is certainly not one which will appeal to literary pundits, but somehow it put the judges of the Pulitzer Prize Committee of 1931 to task trying to explain why they gave Of Thee I Sing first place. In preface to the play which appeared in A Treasury of the Theatre, Mr. Burns Mantle says:

Musical comedy satires do not often appear in anthologies. For that matter, musical comedy satires seldom appear in book form of any character. And a good thing, too. The legend that no musical comedy libretto can possibly have any connection with literature is not necessarily true, but the fact remains that for some hundreds of years, barring the single exception of the Gilbert and Sullivan operettas, no musical comedy libretto has been written that was worthy of book publication.⁴

To quote a few lines from the play will not sufficiently display the satirical humor of the play, nor will it justify Mantle's choice for including it in a collection with such plays as Cyrano de Bergerac, The Cherry Orchard, Hedda Gabler, Hamlet and a score of other world famous plays. Since there are other political plays to discuss we can do no more than include a few typical lines of the Kaufman-Ryskind satire which so mercilessly lampoons American politics.

In the scene already mentioned we see the nominating committee, which consists of Francis Gilhooley and Louis Lippman, drinking and lounging lazily. They are discussing the results of the convention.

Lippman. We got a great ticket haven't we? For President: John P. Wintergreen. He even sounds like a President.

Gilhooley. That's why we picked him.

Lippman. And for vice-president--(hesitates)--what's the name of that fellow we nominated for vice-president?

Gilhooley. Ah--Pitts, wasn't it?

⁴Burns Mantle, p. 27.

Lippman. No, no--it was a longer name.

Gilhooley. Barbinelli?

Lippman. No.

Gilhooley. Well, that's longer.

Lippman. You're a hell of a National Committeeman. Don't even know the name of the vice-president we nominate.

They are interrupted by another committeeman who tries to help them remember.

Lippman. Hey, Fulton! to decide a bet: what's the name of that fellow we nominated for vice-president?

Fulton. What? Oh--Schaeffer, wasn't it?

Gilhooley. That's right!

Lippman. No, no! Schaeffer turned it down.

Fulton. Oh, yes.

Gilhooley. Wait a minute! Are you sure we nominated a vice-president?

Fulton. Of course. Didn't I make the nominating speech?

Gilhooley. Oh, yeah.

Fulton. (Thoughtful) What was his name again?

Gilhooley. Well, think a minute. How did you come to nominate him?

Lippman. Who introduced him to you?

Fulton. Nobody introduced him. I picked his name out of a hat, and this fellow lost.

(The telephone again)

Lippman. Hello...No, no, you've got the wrong room...What's his name again?...Gotabottle?...Oh, Throttlebottom. Wait a minute. (To the others) Guy named Bottlethrottle says he has an appointment with somebody here.

Fulton. Never heard of him.

Gilhooley. Not me.⁵

⁵ Act I, p. 31.

A little later after they have replenished their supply of White Rock and other liquid refreshments a knock is heard at the door, and the door slowly opens. A timid little fellow enters all smiling and addresses Fulton first.

Fulton. I'm afraid I don't quite place you. Your face is familiar, but--

Throttlebottom. I'm Throttlebottom.

Fulton. What?

Throttlebottom. Alexander Throttlebottom.

Jones. (pushing him right out) We're very busy, my good man. If you'll just--...

Throttlebottom. But I'm Throttlebottom. I'm the candidate for vice-president.⁶

The whole piece continues in this burlesque manner of dialogue. There are rapid changes of scene as when they conduct a beauty contest at Atlantic City to determine who will be the first lady. But poor Wintergreen is so embarrassed when the decision is made that he marries the wrong girl and later when he is installed in the White House he discovers a national campaign is conducted against his wife and him. It is here that the satire reaches Gilbert and Sullivan levels. According to Stark Young, Of Thee I Sing and Face the Music emphasizes a new trend in dramatic production.

...it is worth while noting again this increasing Aristophanic trend in our musical-comedy writing, this go at the semi-rotten fantasy, semi-innocence and somewhat hard ebullience of American life, as expressed particularly in the fields of the political, national, and municipal. The politicians, ambassadors and so on in one of these plays, and in the other the policemen with their tin boxes, as representing the only people untouched by the depression, make wholesome, important and laughing theatre.⁷

In Both Your Houses (1933) Maxwell Anderson has picked up the trend but

⁶Ibid., pp. 32-33.

⁷"Town Notes", The New Republic, Vol. 70, Mar. 9, 1932, p. 97.

has presented a more serious satire, the purpose of which is to expose political corruption in Washington, and the bitter disillusionment and cynicism of a trusting electorate. His corrupt legislators in the story are counterparts of his Cecil, Raleigh and Bacon in Elizabeth The Queen. Anderson succeeds only part way in his indictment of a corrupt government and political piracy because he is either unable or he doesn't care to trace his findings to their sources. Like many of his fellow satirists, however, he received the Pulitzer Prize for this play in the year 1932-1933. He was not much impressed, however, since he knew himself that the play is the least worthy of his writing efforts. Incidentally, Both Your Houses is the only which is not written in the combined blank verse and poetic prose which characterizes his later plays.

The story centers round a young man from Nevada who is on the Appropriations Committee. His purposes are ethical but he is forced to play the game with the others and through them is unsuccessful. The theme of Anderson's play is based on an old saying concerning high offices--"To hold power is inevitably to traffic in it and be corrupted by it".⁸ At least that is Eleanor Flexner's opinion. Anderson uses for his material the passage of an appropriation bill over the veto of the president. The bill requests \$40,000,000 to build a dam and ends as an omnibus bill with numerous "riders" including some very questionable projects like the extension of naval maneuvers near a congressman's real estate undertaking and a war on a Japanese beetle in a section where no such beetles exist. This one conscientious congressman not only fights the ridiculous proposition of graft but desires to have

⁸ American Playwrights, 1918-1938, p. 19.

his own election investigated. Alan McClean in keeping with his name remembers the will of his constituents when he goes to Congress. He knows their interests are centered in the dam and he becomes an enemy of almost the whole Congressional body.

At the end when Alan fully realizes the trickery of his associates he cries out a message of warning and council to all who listen.

More people are open-minded nowadays than you'd believe. A lot of them aren't so sure we found the final answer a hundred and fifty years ago. Who knows what's the best kind of government? Maybe they all get rotten after a while and have to be replaced. It doesn't matter about you or me. We had a little set-to here over a minor matter, and you've won, but I want to tell you I'm not even a premonition of what you're going to hear crashing around you if the voters who elect you ever find out what you're like and what you do to them. The best I can do is just to help them find it out.⁹

This suggests an almost personal appeal to the audience. It is one point which makes it differ from the other political plays. Another difference is in the racy wise cracking and unrestrained ribald language of Congressman Sol Fitzgerald. Mr. Richard Dana Skinner in summing up his criticism of the play seems to think it had definite influence upon the audience. "He tells the unvarnished tale of indirect bribery, and tells it so well that it leaves you a bit disturbed at the pit of your stomach and with an appreciably increased blood pressure."¹⁰

First Lady (1935) was an exceedingly popular satire on the role of Washington society in national politics. Since the social side is stressed we will not consider it further here more than to say that Katherine Dayton, who collaborated with Mr. Kaufman in the writing of this amusing expose of the social life of our national political leaders and their wives, was thor-

⁹ K. Coe and W. H. Cordell, Pulitzer Prize Plays, Act III, Scene ii, p. 792.

¹⁰ Commonweal, Mar. 22, 1933, p. 582.

oughly acquainted and well qualified to write on the subject.

Perhaps the most daring of all our political satires is I'd Rather Be Right (1937) also written in part by George S. Kaufman. The other part is accredited to Moss Hart. It is more daring than any of the others in that Mr. Kaufman has, without any qualms, named the president, Mr. Roosevelt, Mr. Farley, Miss Perkins, Mr. Morgenthau, and others. He has satirized the New Deal and ridiculed the W.P.A. workers who hate to work; yet notwithstanding all this the political forces at Washington were some of the first to applaud his caustic playfulness.

Like Of Thee I Sing the play is at its best in the first part and seems to drag somewhat as it proceeds. In both cases the playwrights have not reserved their gusto until the end. Mr. Stark Young says this tendency is a weakness in satirical playwriting. The following is an extract from a criticism of his on Of Thee I Sing: "In all satire it is the sum of the whole, the conclusion most of all, that delivers the hilarious blow, as distinguished from mere antics, and creates the fable, as distinguished from mere jokes."¹¹

I'd Rather Be Right has no plot but the story is hung together by the unfortunate circumstances of a young couple who want to get married but are prevented from doing so until the President balances the budget. When President Roosevelt asks them why they don't get married, Philip, the boy, says, "We can't get married unless I get a raise, and the Boss won't give me the raise until he knows what you're going to do. He says you've got to balance the budget before he does anything."¹² The President of course evades an answer by asking the young people if they wouldn't like some ice cream, thereby changing the subject.

¹¹"Town Notes", The New Republic, Mar. 9, 1932, p. 97.

¹²Act I, p. 16.

Stark Young claims that the love theme is not used solely as a conventional string of sentiment to hold the loose ends together but that it is essential to the scheme of the play. This is how he explains it:

The two problems: how shall this boy and girl afford to get married; and how shall the national budget be balanced, are brought together, since only in relation to people and growing life does government make any sense.¹³

The role of president is so jovially portrayed by Mr. Cohan that even Mr. Roosevelt enjoyed seeing himself lampooned. In the theatre the satire reaches mere cartoon performance in one little detail when Mr. Cohan mimics Mr. Roosevelt in a mannerism of shaking his head while talking. There are numerous other caricatures but none so finely drawn as the leading role. The chorus of Supreme Court judges portrayed as very old men, and the W.P.A. workers leaning on their shovels all add variety to the jolly burlesque.

In each of the political satires chosen we see the various stages of development from the indefinite ridicule of politicians in A Texas Steer up to the very definitely named persons of the "New Deal" regime.

The theatre is one institution which has been safe-guarded from any violent attacks from the dramatic satirist. That protective measure is a sort of vicious circle which encloses the playwright and theatre in a bond of put and take. This is especially true since the theatre has become such a powerful commercial institution. It has had enough enemies, since the moving-picture industry made such sweeping strides and the little theatres became so popular, without encouraging others. Dramatists did not see fit to ridicule the source of their own sustenance. There have been occasional slurs at managers, actors, types of plays and even at the playwrights themselves

¹³"Gods, Golden Lads and Girls", The New Republic, Nov. 17, 1937, p. 44.

but few real satires have appeared upon the theatre as an institution.

Before the commercial theatres assumed full control over play production there have been a few early attempts to satirize certain objectionable plays or absurd types of acting. Then there have been those who have upheld the theatre by satirizing some opposing force to it. Perhaps these writers were encouraged by Royall Tyler's attempt to show the harmlessness of the theatre in his little gossip scene which the "innocent" Jonathan saw behind the green curtains. Bartley Campbell in Separation (1884) continued the Jonathan theme of puritanical prejudice against the theatre in a different type of attack. His arrow is shot at cruel Puritanical teaching which is concretely exhibited in the separation of a child from her mother for fifteen years because that mother refused to obey her husband who forbade her to sing for charity at an amateur theatrical performance. There is also a forecast of the freedom of the women in the revolt of the wife.

Augustine Daly expressed his objection to the sentimental romantic play in the first two acts of Roughing It, and in an adaptation of a German play, The Princess Royal, he satirizes the absurdities of romantic dramas. The romantic actor and the attitude of the public toward them is another phase of satire connected with the theatre. Richard Mansfield was a popular actor of the romantic type during the nineties. He also wrote plays to suit his own style of acting because there was such a dearth of available material which would set off the histrionic ability he possessed. In one of his plays Don Juan (1891), he sharply satirized the public attitude toward actors.¹⁴

William Dean Howells took a little different stand on the actor in A

¹⁴

Arthur H. Quinn, A History of the American Drama From the Beginning to the Civil War, Vol. I, p. 204.

True Hero (1909). His hero is an example of the more realistic one as opposed to the stock hero of melodrama. A worthless woman tries to win a lover as a screen for her intrigue and loses. The modern young hero suddenly realizes that her love is insincere and he refuses to sacrifice himself to her artifices.

The play which is constructed in seven parts, offers an example of Howells' unique structure in playwriting. A few lines from the seventh and last part include Howells' admission that he is opposed to the melodramatic heroes of sentimental dramas. Tolboy, one of the characters, is a mouthpiece for Mr. Howells. Lannard is the hero. The play appeared in Harper's Magazine.

Lannard. I've fallen below my ideal.

Tolboy. The ideal of a man who thinks such a woman does things once in a way, and may be redeemed by a good round lying piece of self-sacrifice? But such a woman always does such things in every way, and she can only be shielded, never saved. No, No! Never regret that in this case you've looked out for yourself. You've shown yourself a true hero! Some day I hope we shall have you in the novels and the plays.¹⁵

In 1921 American playgoers observed satires on the absurdities of the drama of other countries, such as Bulldog Drummond which has a satirical slant at British melodrama, and Chauve-Souris, a delicate stab at the new Russian school of the theatre.

The most biting of all criticism of the theatre or its related subjects is George Kelly's Torch Bearers (1922). It is whole-heartedly a satire on the arch-enemy of the commercial theatre. In a good natured, highly amusing manner Kelly attacks the little theatres and amateur producers. The play was a tremendous success and still is, especially in those institutions which it

¹⁵ Vol. CXIX, Nov. 1909, p. 875.

satirizes. In the preface to the printed play Kenneth Macgowan wrote some interesting notes on the play and on the subject of the popularity of satirical dramatic productions at that time (February 25, 1923). Here is a brief extract from that preface:

The Torch-Bearers passed a prosperous term on Broadway, and I think it will go far in the little theatres which it satirizes. But upon the opening night I remember much dubious debate about its chances. Yet conscious of our personal superiority we wondered. ...Brander Matthews and Aristotle would scoff at it, George M. Cohan and Professor Baker would scowl. The Torch-Bearers broke all rules, and it had no plot. Obviously, by all rules it ought to fail. There may be a good many reasons why it didn't, and some may lead you far into aesthetic explorations of the present breakdown of dramatic form all over the world. Personally, I should put it down to the fact that the character-study of the first act and the hokum of the second are irresistible. We have all met our Pampinellis, and we have all seen the lady prompter take a curtain call, or had our mustache fall off in the big scene. We can never resist some characterization on the stage, and as for such hokum as this record of all the mishaps of the amateur actor, ill luck is the heart of broad comedy and when ill luck comes where it is most painful --in personal display--Cassandra herself must smile.¹⁶

There is no plot to hang the fast moving action and spirited dialogue together. The Torch-Bearers are a group of energetic people affected by the little theatre epidemic. The first scene is a rehearsal of a play in the home of the leading lady who has succeeded to the part because of the death of the husband of the original leading lady. Mr. Ritter returns home unexpectedly from a business trip. He falls down the stairs and is knocked senseless when he sees his wife act. The rehearsal would be postponed at this point but for the serious and self-efficient Mrs. Pampinelli, who takes hold of the unfortunate situation. The first act ends in this manner:

Hossefrosse. ...I think I'd better call Dr. Wentworth. (He snatches up the telephone and works the hook violently).

¹⁶
pp. 10-11.

Mrs. Pampinelli. Yes, I would. (She turns around to her left and stands looking questioningly at Mrs. Ritter.) Go on with your lines Paula.

Mrs. Ritter. Well, is he dead, Betty?

Mrs. Pampinelli. (With a definite little gesture of her right hand). Never mind! (The curtain commences to descend, and she sweeps forward). We will go right on from where Mr. Ritter fell down-stairs.¹⁷

In the second act the real performance is on. The usual errors of an amateur show are piled one upon another. The actors forget their cues and receive the wrong ones, one side of the pasted mustache falls off, the curtain falls at the wrong time and countless other mishaps which keep the performance in fast motion. At the end of their performance they are sure that the audience didn't notice the little flaws anyway. Toward the end of the play Mr. Ritter suggests that in the future when Mrs. Ritter feels any dramatic instinct coming on to execute her feelings in the attic where no one will see or hear her. The conversation which follows his remark is the keynote of the whole satire.

Mrs. Pampinelli. ...What did you expect to see, Mr. Ritter,--a finished performance from a group of comparative amateurs?.... I'm a bit curious--to know just how Mr. Ritter would expect to accomplish the establishment of a Little Theatre here, unless through the medium of such performances as this one this evening.

Ritter. Well, I'm equally as curious, Mrs. Pampinelli, as to your exact qualifications--as a discoverer or developer of talent for the theatre.

Mrs. Pampinelli. That is a very familiar attitude. People who do things--are constantly having their ability to do them called into question.

Ritter. I'm afraid that's something you've read somewhere. (She glares at him.)

¹⁷ Act I, p. 92.

Mrs. Pampinelli. The theatre is a matter of instinct.

Ritter. The theatre is a matter of qualifications,--the same as any other profession; and it will only be through those particular qualifications that your Little Theatre will ever be brought about.¹⁸

Mr. Robert Allerton Parker especially praises the last act from which this quotation comes. He does not exactly agree with his "vaudeville humor and knockabout farce" of the second act but for the manner in which Kelly carried out an old idea of amateur acting he commends him highly. Concerning the last act he says:

That he has succeeded in suggesting, even faintly, such a masterpiece of comedy as Les Femmes Savantes is in itself no usual attainment. There is certainly an engaging likeness to Molière's comedy of the learned ladies in The Torch-Bearers. Paul Ritter, Nelly Fell, and Mrs. J. Duro Pampinelli are contemporary incarnations of Armande, Belise and Philamente, those completely misdirected exponents of learning and literature.¹⁹

Other plays dealing satirically with the theatre and allied subjects have appeared from time to time but none have any more satirical significance than these plays have. Some of them, like Once in a Lifetime, written by Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman in 1930, deal with theatrical material like vaudeville and the movies and as such they are not to be considered here.

The American dramatist has given vent to very little religious satire. Even the early plays which opposed the Puritans were not in a strict sense assaults upon the religion of that sect but upon the material effects of their beliefs. Dogma or theology have seldom entered into the dramas centered upon religion. Most of the intolerance and satirical thrusts at definite sects has come from our journals, periodicals and pamphlets.

¹⁸ Act III, p. 180.

¹⁹ "New Playwrights and New Producers", The Independent, Vol. 109, Dec. 23, 1922, pp. 397-398.

As early as 1824 James Nelson Barker began an attack upon the Puritans of New England in his Superstition. His satire was directed at their persecution of witches and at their treatment of members of non-conforming sects but not upon their faith in God or their manner of worship. Mr. Tyler pointed in scorn to the Puritans' defiance to the theatre and their attempts to deprive even those not of their faith from enjoying clean wholesome entertainment. Johnathan's attendance at the "hocus-pocus" entertainment in The Contrast is a striking example of such satire.

There have been occasional thrusts at religion in general or at certain irresponsible clergymen whose religious sect was not mentioned such as in The Henrietta (1887). Bronson Howard, like many of our present day dramatists respected the religious freedom clause of our Constitution. In this play he merely exemplifies the old saying "practice what you preach" in the role of the mercenary clergyman whose soul was tainted by too much interest in "high finances". In the list of characters Bronson has made a special effort to explain the part of the clergyman by placing an appropriate quotation under his name as: The Rev. Dr. Murray Hilton, A Shepard, "It was to combat and expose such as these, no doubt, that laughter was made".--Vanity Fair.

The worldly-minded rector preaches against materialism to his congregation on Sunday and the next day is seeking advantageous "tips" on the stock market. Mr. Vanalstyne remarks to his clerk about the letter he just received from his pastor. Before reading he says,

Vanalstyne. ...another subscription I suppose. (Long pause) By thunder! Our pastor has dropped on the Henrietta Mine deal, and he wants to know if I can let him in. I thought he had been more than usually anxious about my spiritual welfare lately...We must let him in for a few thousands, if we don't he'll give us away to the whole congregation, and the leading pillars of our church are also pillars of the Stock Exchange. (Turns half to Musgrave.) Write to the Rev. Dr.

Murray Hilton. (dictates.) "Will meet you at Friday evening prayers."²⁰

The Rev. Hilton shows further that his interests are not all centered in spiritual activities. He fights against Mr. Vanalstyne for the hand of the very wealthy widow, Mrs. Cornelia Opdyke. But when he discovers she has been ruined financially he suddenly withdraws his protestations of love.

In 1906 William Vaughn Moody wrote The Great Divide which is not a religious satire but a social drama with a slight vein of criticism for Puritanism. The Faith Healer (1909) has already been briefly discussed in Chapter I. In Hit-the-Trail Holliday (1915) George M. Cohan gently lampoons "Billy Sunday" with an exceedingly humorous caricature of a bartender taking the lead in a prohibition campaign. We have already seen the satiric slant against the church in Jesse Lynch Williams' Why Marry? (1917).

Bride of the Lamb (1926) written by William Hurlbut is not basically a satire but it has satiric aims at revival meetings and the leaders of them. Arthur Pollack says of Mrs. Bowman in the introduction to the play: "the inarticulate little Mrs. Bowman plunges joyously into the orgies of a religious revival, believing herself brushing heaven when actually she teeters over hell."²¹ It is an ironic tragedy fusing religious ecstasy with starved and blind love. At the end of the play Mr. Hurlbut strikes a dominantly ironic chord when he pictures the religious imposter cowering in a corner asking God's forgiveness as the coroner leads out the raving-mad Mrs. Bowman who has clothed herself in a bridal veil of white mosquito netting and a wreath of paper flowers. She greets the coroner with a happy, silly smile

²⁰ Allen G. Halline, Act I, p. 417.

²¹ p. vii.

and says, "And you've been saved too. Praise God--Hallelujah! Over three million have been saved! Yes! What a harvest--!"²²

The picture that "Rev. Albough" paints of himself is a caricature of unworthy clergymen who use the garb of religion to traffic in profitable preaching.

Ina. How long ago was it you was called, Rev. Albough?

Albough. 'Bout seven years now. I've been most everything in my time. I been an actor. I was on the vawdeville stage. And I joined up with a circus once. And I've been a barker for carnivals. And I been most everything. I couldn't tell you--some things I'd be ashamed to tell you. Then one night I felt a hand was laid on my spirit--and like a voice sez to me in my ear--Come to me, there is work in the Vineyard, and the laborers are few. Do you mean me? I sez. Yes, Sanderson Albough, the voice sez. I tried to put it out of my mind. I laughed and joked--I blasphemed and I got drunk. But I couldn't forget the voice that called me. And so I give up fighting against God, and I sez, I'm here, Lord--I'm your servant, do with me according to Thy will. And I begun my preaching right there and then. And the power come to me. And since that day they's been nine thousand three hundred and fifty souls my humble preaching has saved for Christ! Amen. I never was religiously ordained--not by elders and the laying on of hands --but I been ordained by a greater One. Oh, yes, my life would make a book of marvels.²³

There is a deep ironic significance in Ina's last act of draping a bridal veil of innocence and purity about her as she goes with the coroner to account for the death of a faithless husband for whom she had painfully drudged through the years.

In 1922 John Colton and Clemence Randolph adapted a short story of Somerset Maugham's and put it into dramatic form. They called it Rain. It is a drama of religious fanaticism, hypocrisy, and depression. Although not primarily a satire, it has a satiric strain in it.

²²Ibid., Act III, p. 140.

²³Act III, p. 118.

There are evident shafts of satire in at least the first act of Susan and God (1934). It is the second time that Rachel Crothers has attempted satire to any great extent. We recall how Minnie, the simple country girl, triumphed over her "self-expressive" opponent by doing a better job of "self-expression" with Willie. That was fourteen years before she attempted to ridicule certain superficial forms of religious cults. Susan, who is a social butterfly, is married to Barrie, a drunkard. She neglects both Barrie and Blossom, her daughter, in her flitting from one craze to another. She has just returned from a trip abroad where she picked up the seed of what seems to be Dr. Buchman's Oxford Movement. She is in such ecstacy over "the new way to God" that she becomes an ardent disciple by attempting to reform all her worldly minded friends by suggesting a public confession of their sins and a fresh start. It is then that her husband picks up her new gospel and promises with God's help and hers also, to stop drinking. He also adds that he won't give her a divorce. The depth of her faith is sounded when he asks her to help him.

Barrie. You said--no matter what we are--or what we've done--we can be made over--if we--ask--God--to help. --That's what made me change my mind about the divorce--that's what made me think you might want me to try again. Listen, Susan--this is what I came in to say--Do you think there's any hope for me?

Susan. We can't expect miracles.²⁴

But he is insistant and asks her if there's anything in what she has hold of why it can't help him. She has promised everyone else. Susan replies:

Susan. Yes--but you may not be one of the ones who can be changed. It means complete self-abnegation.²⁵

²⁴ Act II, p. 80.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 81.

His deep affection for his daughter and a desire to win back his wife's love make him persistent. Caught within the net of her own cult she has to promise a reconciliation to her husband if he goes straight. But she cries out almost in despair, "I wish I'd never heard of God!"

The end is rather sentimental and questionable. Susan awakens and realizes her obligations as a mother and wife and expresses it in these words: "Oh, dearest--I don't think God is something out there--to pray to. --I think He's here--in us. And I don't believe He helps one bit--till we dig and dig and dig--to get the rottenness out of us. ...Barrie hold me. ... Oh, dear God--don't let me fall down again."²⁶

It is this sudden transformation that Eleanor Flexner offers objections to in the following paragraph from her American Playwrights.

Now this is all very fine, but without her excursion into misguided piety Susan would in all probability never have acquired such insight. Yet Miss Crothers also shows us the less admirable results of "the new way to God"--hypocrisy, meddling, the evasion of immediate responsibilities for a "more glamorous mission". We are left of two minds as to whether it is thoroughly pernicious or admirable in its direct results.

She believes that this lack of penetration blunts her satire and continues:

Her satire is further blunted by superficiality. Buchmanism is a spiritual and intellectual manifestation whose roots go deep into present-day life and whose implications are far-reaching.²⁷

Miss Flexner's statement only goes to prove the fact that our interpretations differ in accordance with what we have to put into them. Mr. Grenville Vernon offers a little variation in his criticism.

It sets out to be a satire on the extravagances of the Buchmanites, and at the end of the first act we look forward to a play which is to be mordant criticism of a religiosity which appeals to the boredom of the well-to-do, without making any demands upon them in the shape of sacrifice.²⁸

²⁶ Act III, Scene ii, pp. 164-165.

²⁷ p. 247.

²⁸ The Commonweal, Oct. 22, 1937, p. 606.

But isn't this satire itself?

Some plays have been written perhaps without any satiric intention but they appear very satiric to some readers and individuals in an audience. Whether or not there is any intended satire in Family Portrait (1938) which was written by William Joyce Cowen and his wife, Lenore Coffee, cannot be fully determined. In an attempt to procure information about the Cowens I discovered little more than the fact that they are scenario writers. It is possible while in Hollywood they have been inoculated with the contagious germ that produces distorted history. In this case it is Biblical history. They have built the story of the family of Jesus on a loose interpretation of the gospel of St. Mark 6:14 from the King James Version of the Bible with no regard for Christian foundations. Family Portrait is a defiant fling at the Divinity of Christ and distasteful to those who believe in the Immaculate Conception of Mary. It is not that Mary is portrayed disrespectfully; on the contrary she rises above the other characters in kindness, understanding and dignity. Rather it is that Mary is robbed of the distinct honor of being Mother of her Divine Son, Jesus. The concept of her commonplace off-spring, her several children, in their jealousy and bickering being brothers and sisters of Jesus doesn't fit into the true picture of the Holy Family.

Family Portrait is not a satire, yet it does embody some apparently satiric lines and ironic implications. A thrust at Christ's Divinity can be perceived in the following lines when Hepzibah, the village gossip, lends some dishes to Mary for the occasion of the home-coming of Jesus. She says, "Not my best--but better than Mary has. The fuss that went on here in this house--you'd think no other mother in Nazareth ever had a son!"²⁹ Again

²⁹ Act II, Scene ii, p. 97.

Hepzibah refers to Christ's miracles as though they might be the acts of a magician.

Hepzibah. (with renewed malice) Well, Daniel--trying to do tricks like your Uncle Jesus?

Mary. (with a gasp) Oh!

Hepzibah. (crosses to Daniel) If you like magic, there's a wonderful fakir in town this morning--an Egyptian. You ought to see him! Makes flowers grow in a barren pot--tears a scarf in two and makes it all one piece again.³⁰

At the end of the play Mary asks Judah, her youngest son, to name his first child after his brother. Her last words are the most cutting of all.

Mary. If it's a boy, will you name him after your brother--(hesitatingly) After Jesus, I mean?

Judah. Why--why yes, mother. I'll talk to Deborah about it.

Mary. It's a nice name. I'd like him not to be forgotten.³¹

When I heard these words die out in the Goodman Theatre I wondered how many of those who applauded so enthusiastically called themselves Christians. Suddenly I looked up to the inscription over the curtain and when I read again, "You yourself must set flame to the fagots which you have brought", then I understood.

Family Portrait has also conveyed a deeply ironic impression to the less religious minded audiences. The portrait is one of any large family in any period of time. Caustic criticism is waged on a short sighted and unfair community for passing destructive judgment upon the whole family of one who has erred. Ironically enough innocent individuals in a family are often subjected to the scorn of the neighborhood because another member of that family has transgressed from the conventional moral standards of the community.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 100-101.

³¹ Ibid., Scene iii, pp. 183-184.

Such is the case of Judah. His marriage to Miriam is called off by Mendel, the marriage-broker, and the rabbi. The following scene takes place when these two gentlemen, representatives of Miriam's father, call upon Mary to convey the distressing news to her.

Rabbi. Aaron has called off the marriage between Judah and Miriam.

Mary. Called if off!

Rabbi. But why?

Mendel. I hate to say this, Mary--and the words are my client's--not mine.

Mary. Go on.

Mendel. (Reluctantly) Your family is getting a bad reputation. (a long pause.)

Rabbi. Because of Jesus.³²

Judah's reaction to the news is most sardonic. He impulsively forsakes his Brother to further his own selfish desire. After being informed by Mary that Aaron, Miriam's father, offered a compromise Judah shouts:

Judah. What was it?

Mary. He wanted us to disown Jesus--forbid him the house--

Judah. Well, why didn't you do it!

Mary. Judah!

.....
Judah. I hate him! I hate him! I wish he were dead!³³

The business world with all its deceits, intrigue, greed, and bribery has always been an easy topic for the satirist. It is a sort of pivot round which society, politics and religion revolve or are ensnared. Even art has

³² Act II, Scene ii, pp. 111-112.

³³ Ibid., pp. 122-123.

been caught into the whirlpool of this much revered American institution. Especially after the World War people went "money mad". Mr. Hornblow sensed this trend even earlier than this when he said,

The making of money became the one and only aim of every effort. Of great actors, not one remained. The stage was engulfed in a wave of commercialism that gradually destroyed the art of acting, elevated mediocrities to the dignity of stars, turned playwrights into hacks, misled and vitiated public taste, and the drama, from an art, became a business.³⁴

He referred to the circumstances of the theatre chiefly but what he said regarding the thirst for money is applicable here. The urge to succeed was so impelling that competition caused men to play the game deceitfully, if "necessary". As far back as 1882 Charles H. Hoyt perceived deceptive policies in business and he presented a jolly little farce, A Bunch of Keys, in which some of the pretentious practices employed in the management of a hotel were satirized. We have already become acquainted with this play in the first chapter so we will not quote further. Two other plays of Hoyt's, The Rag Baby (1884) and The Brass Monkey (1888), have been used to demonstrate the same idea of deceits in business. In both plays emphasis is laid upon humorous incidents which occurred when men take over a business which they know nothing about. Margaret Mayorga says, "Since Hoyt introduced the theme, it has seen many modifications on the American stage, ultimately developing into the success play of the American Youth who establishes a large business from scant foundations".³⁵ These big business plays of which she speaks were especially popular in the second decade of the twentieth century and continued until about 1925. Winchell Smith was the chief exponent of such

³⁴ A History of the Theatre in America from Its Beginning to the Present Time, Vol. II, p. 318.

³⁵ Op. Cit., p. 207.

dramas. Turn to the Right (1916) was one of the most popular of these. In the Fortune Hunter (1909), Smith shows the influence of Hoyt more than in any of the others. A money-monger sets out to procure wealth by marrying a rich girl but he finds later that love is much more important than money. Nothing But the Truth (1916) reveals some of the clever schemes employed in business in order to raise money.

The Henrietta (1888), which has already been cited for its religious and political aspects, emphasizes the money interest and deceits of business better than any of the other early plays and is more satiric than most of the business plays of Winchell Smith. Mr. Halline chooses Bronson Howard as the best representative for this class of play. Here is an interesting note taken from his introduction to the play.

Howard's thinking on the subject of the drama led him to the conclusion that each country had its own master theme; in England it was caste, in France marital fidelity, and in America business. ...Howard treated this theme with skill, humor, and penetration in The Henrietta; and fore-shadowing the evaluation placed upon the great American occupation of many present day writers, Howard reveals the flat disregard of ethics fundamental to the practice of "high finance".³⁶

Mr. Vanalstyne is the financial giant whose whole life is centered on business. He sets aside friendship, religion, health, love, even his family, in the interest of the great stock-market. His pet undertaking is the Henrietta Mine. Most of the scenes are in the office of Mr. Vanalstyne's home. There is much fast action keeping up to the rapid moving ticker tape. A few lines taken almost at random will illustrate the heartlessness and trickery of those contaminated by the germs of greed and ambition for financial power. We meet Vanalstyne first in the role of a trickster after he receives word

³⁶Op. Cit., p. 207.

that his daughter is to marry Lord Arthur Fitzroy Waldegrave Rawdon Trelawney who is the son of the Marquis of Dorchester. In ordering Musgrave, his clerk, to send a cable he says, "Add to that cable. (Dictates.) 'Tell the Marquis I can let him have a block of Northern Pacific Common at twenty-nine!' I'll land the old man for all my girl's wedding expenses."³⁷ Dr. Wainright, who is a friend and medical adviser of the family, warns Vanalstyne Jr., who has inherited his father's avariciousness.

Wainright. ...You must have rest.

Vanalstyne Jr. Rest! There's a battle on hand today. Do you hear the musketry? (Laughing and moving up stage to telephone; speaks into it.) Hold the markets at all hazards. Force the figures back to sixty-eight. Pardon me, Doctor; call again this afternoon. I have no time now. (His hand is on the door.) Business is business, you know; and what is rest with wealth and power within your grasp! (Exits.)³⁸

Bertie, the younger son of Mr. Vanalstyne, whom we met before in the role of an insipid clubman, utters these satiric words when he compares the stock market with gambling dens. His knowledge of business is nil.

Bertie. I have become a wild and desperate gambler. During the last ten nights I have been visiting faro-banks and other dens of iniquity. I have at last come down to Wall Street. I desire to encounter a tiger of a larger size and more savage nature. They tell me that I shall find such an animal here. The smaller ones have ceased to distract my thoughts. Will you teach me the game?³⁹

Nicholas Vanalstyne, Jr., demonstrates the importance of business in the "double-crossing" of his father. Flint, a broker, reminds Nicholas of his deception when he says,

³⁸ Ibid., p. 420.

³⁹ Act III, p. 437.

Flint. ...Your father has sailed on his steam yacht for a day's excursion, leaving his affairs in your charge. You have been waiting for an opportunity like this to strike the final blow, after fighting against him in secret for more than three months. You have been working the market today from the private office of your father's bitterest enemy on the Street--Mr. John Van Brunt. If you succeed in beating down the price of Henrietta to sixty-five, before three o'clock, Nicholas Vanalstyne will be ruined, and you will be a millionaire many times over. We understand each other perfectly, you see.⁴⁰

As a slow curtain descends over the lifeless form of Vanalstyne, Jr., at the end of the third act, nothing can be heard but the dull and monotonous ticking of tape. This effective sound is used satirically and reminds one of a similar device, the tom-tom that Eugene O'Neill employed in his Emperor Jones.

Mr. Roi Cooper Megrue and Mr. Walter Hackett in writing It Pays to Advertise (1914), did not intend to write a satire but much of their play turns out satiric implications. It is a farce which moves with much gusto in keeping with its subject matter. It is just an early edition of One Hundred Million Guinea Pigs plus a plot. The young son just out of Harvard wishes to show his father that he is capable of establishing himself successfully in business. His scheme is to become an opponent of his father in selling interest in a soap company which exists only in paper bonds. Here is a satiric thrust at many of our present day holding companies. By advertising in an extravagant manner Rodney corners the whole soap market and proves to his father that it does not matter what a product is, nor how good it is, it can be sold if properly advertised. The play has more satiric effects today than when it was written, since the radio was unheard of then. One of the most daring devices of these playwrights was to use actual names such as Ivory Soap, Boston Garters and Wrigley's Spearmint Gum. Commercialism is carica-

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 438.

tured in this play by billboards, circulars, pamphlets, newspaper advertising columns, and the mails. It Pays to Advertise advertised advertising.

In 1933 Mr. Arthur Kallet and F. J. Schlink were so popular with their daring indictment of the deceptive methods of advertising under false claims, that by 1935 their remarkable book, One Hundred Million Guinea Pigs, was then in the thirtieth edition. They were not so original after all. Perhaps their inspiration came from these lines: "Can you tell the difference between a vintage wine and last year's champagne? Sure, you can: it costs more. Son, the world is full of bunk. Ninety-seven per cent of the people are sheep, and you can get 'em all by advertising."⁴¹ Kallet and Schlink had the same idea but they changed the sheep to guinea pigs.

"Nearly all the great men have been married; it can't be merely a coincidence."--Act Third. This quotation is placed just below the names of George S. Kaufman and Marc Connelly on the title page of To the Ladies. It is the keynote of the play these gentlemen wrote in 1922. It is the theme of the "big boob in business" who is solely dependent upon his wife for inspiration and success. Perhaps the playwrights tried to compensate for Dulcy in giving so capable and attractive a young woman the role of Leonard's wife. It is the old apron-strings plot. Leonard would suffer severe consequences in his business dealings because of his stupidity and conceit if it were not for his clever, energetic and sympathetic wife. The whole play satirizes Leonard's type in all walks of life where incapable persons are often occupying the positions of the mighty instead of those more capable individuals who were the means of putting them there.

The play was chiefly successful because of its satiric portrayal of the public banquet. This phase of the story is not original but it was worked

⁴¹ Montrose J. Moses, Representative American Dramas, Act I, p. 344.

out so naturally that it gave to the play a sense of freshness and humor not presented before. The Kincaid Piano Company gives a banquet and Leonard has learned a speech out of a book for the occasion. Unfortunately another young man, who is his opponent as a candidate for an official position with the organization, arises before him and gives Leonard's well-memorized oration. Almost paralyzed with fright Leonard arises after the other young man sat down. He tries to talk. Before he can display his stupidity Elsie rises and apologizes for her husband's sudden case of laryngitis. Then she makes a human appeal to Mr. Kincaid and becomes the success of the evening. She has received the coveted promotion for her husband.

Kaufman and Connelly, in depicting the dullness of Leonard, take a sudden strike at advertising, too. Leonard has purchased a grape fruit farm on the strength of an advertisement claiming big returns from grape fruit. Elsie tells him that he shouldn't put so much faith in advertising and he replies by pointing out to her examples of what different men made on a popcorn machine. The following excerpt strikes right to the core.

Leonard. McCormick of Michigan made \$550.

Elsie. What McCormick?

Leonard. Michigan.

Elsie. What's his first name?

Leonard. What's the difference if he made all that money?

Elsie. But did he make it?

Leonard. Of course he made it. Doesn't it say so right here! And I suppose you think thousands of fellows don't make a lot of money with these correspondence courses, too?

Elsie. Leonard, don't you see that all those things are for people who--haven't got it in them--who have to acquire all of it

from the outside? You're different--you have the ability--
it's just a case of giving it a chance to come out.⁴²

These last lines point to the deep irony of the play which is concealed in the more open satiric attack on public banquets. It is this loyalty of a wife for a husband she knows to be incapable which is the ironic point often missed. She must uphold her husband and not allow even herself to discredit him. Her reward is his conceit as manifested in the opening of the third act where he is acting in the capacity of his new office. He is dictating a letter and in a very important manner drumming with a pencil on a big desk.

Leonard. (already a regular business man). ...so I cannot say just what our attitude in the future will be in regard to the department. Mr. Toohey now has twelve girls in the mailing department, but believes with me that men not only could do the work better but much more quickly than women. Paragraph. (The riveting machine is heard.) As you know, we believe that as a general rule women are not so capable as men in business.⁴³

Shortly before the "big crash" S. N. Behrman wrote Meteor which summarizes all of the undesirable features of big business. Leonard is praiseworthy in comparison with Raphael Lord who represents American enterprise at its worst. He is the arrogant, deceptive, ruthless, clever charlatan who has given "big business" its bad name. He is, unlike Leonard, entirely in his business, a genius. The play is basically a psychological study but its ironical message is deeply buried under the guise of this freak of the business world.

The business play crashed with the stock market and since then it has been replaced by themes of economic stress and strife which do not come under

⁴² A. H. Quinn, Contemporary American Plays, Act I, p. 314.

⁴³ Act III, p. 356.

the heading of this chapter. The recent era, due to the circumstances of common living, has a wealth of satiric plays which are centered not specifically in business but rather in the social evils which came as a result of the decline of big business.

WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH

CHAPTER IV

From the earliest days of history man has looked upon war ambivalently with a little more preference, perhaps, for war as something to be revered. Traditional respect for the uniform is universal. Even the savage tribes looked up to their warriors as being only one step removed from their hideous gods. It is that spirit among other things which has helped preserve war for us. It is that fetish of hero-worship which brought to the from the dominant militaristic leaders of the present conflict in Europe today.

Here in America it was the "War to end all wars" which changed the attitude of respect for war and the warrior to one of mockery, disdain and fear. A uniform no longer entices the women as it did before the World War or even during that war. The last vestige of that worship is seen in Gilbert Emery's The Hero (1921). It was written not primarily as a satire but it shows the breaking point in the old tradition and satirically pictures Oswald as an example of what may be hidden behind the uniform. It is a fore-runner for several great anti-war plays which followed like What Price Glory?, If This Be Treason and Peace on Earth.

The story of The Hero concerns Oswald who went to France during the War. He left behind a record of broken promises and dishonesty. Returning adorned with a cross of war, he is more arrogant and untrustworthy than before. The psychological reaction of his mother and sister-in-law is sympathy for their "hero". Some of the lines of the play will show the satiric references to war. When Oswald returns from France he brings a pet dog with him. Little Andy, his nephew, looks at him with wonder. The following conversation takes place:

Andy. Uncle Os...granny says you're a hero.

Oswald. (on his knees by the dog) Ssh! Don't you tell Cafard I'm a hero. She might bite me.

Andy. What is a hero, Uncle Os.

Oswald. Oh--(Grins) A hero is a guy that does somethin' he wouldn't a-done, if he'd stopped to think.¹

Oswald commercializes upon his war experiences and the uniform by arousing the sympathy and the admiration of even the congregation of his brother's church where he gives a talk. There is cutting irony in the following lines:

Oswald. ...Say, Mart, you'd oughta heard the spiel I give 'em about the war tonight. Pershing ain't got nothin' on me. Church full, by golly, and little Os right up in the pitcher's box, with the man of God. (In derisive imitation) "Brothers and sisters, we have in store for us this evening a rare treat--our distinguished townsman, Mr. Oswald Lane. --For a cause that lies near to the heart of every mother and father. --The suffering infants of devastated France!" Oh, mister. And brother Andy singing like a sore foot in the choir. And when the guys passed around the plate you oughta seen 'em give up. Brother Andy's countin' it now. I ducked.²

When Andrew, who is tired of supporting his brother, suggests that Oswald better try to find some kind of job, Oswald shouts back at him these significant words:

Oswald. (interrupting angrily) Aw--you'd drive a fellow nuts, you would. Why don't you come right out and say what you mean--that you don't want me here? You're like all the rest of 'em, fight for 'em, get wounded for 'em, croak for 'em, by God! Save their old country for 'em by God! and then have 'em tell you to go to hell. No sir! Not any in mine.³

Oswald's words forecast the changing opinion of war and prepare us for What Price Glory? which was written by Maxwell Anderson and Lawrence Stallings

¹ Gilbert Emery, The Hero, Act III, p. 242.

² Ibid., Act II, p. 255.

³ Ibid., p. 268.

in 1924. The play consists of a series of realistic pictures of war as it is and not as it seemed to be. There is very little plot to hold the play together. Its stark sordidness and photographic realism sustains the interest. Mr. Stallings caught the pictures portrayed when he served in the United States Marines on duty in Belleau Wood. Candidly he relayed them to us. The collaborators were not preaching anti-war doctrine but that is what the play amounted to in the irony of its comedy. There is a typical group of military men found at the battlefields depicted in the various scenes. The tough captain and the top-sergeant who are rat poison to each other furnish most of the interesting conversation and action. At the time the play was first presented there was a great deal of discussion as to the decency of the production. In an article from the New York Evening Sun, September 6, 1924 this comment is given.

There has been some preliminary hanky-panky about the rough talk in which the play abounds, and indeed we are making such progress in this respect that the cussing in Rain seems to have reached the prettiness of Daddy Long Legs. You may be sure there has been some editing, for the American stage is not yet ready for the undiluted speech of the United States Marines.⁴

It was this very undiluted speech which made What Price Glory? so realistic and so successful. The first and third acts present a motley group of Marines gathered in a little French village. It is an ironic picture of soldiers off duty and uninhibited. The second act is a more serious interlude which stirs up the emotions against war as it is seen from the battlefield. The soldiers are reeking with filth and their faces are bearded with a six or eight days growth. They are half dead with terror. Corporal Kiper declares that "the

⁴Montrose J. Moses and John M. Brown, The American Theatre As Seen By Its Critics, p. 247.

whole damned universe is crazy now".⁵ Kiper must have been looking ahead twenty years. Then he proceeds to terrify Corporal Lipinsky by denying the existence of God. Moore's blasphemy exceeds the others when he sees Dave stripped of one arm. Moore then complains to Flagg: "Since six o'clock there's been a wounded sniper in the tree by that orchard angel crying 'Kamerad! Kamerad!' Just like a big crippled whippoorwill. What price glory? Why in God's name can't we all go home?"⁶ The discussion of the soldiers gathered in the little French cottage which is used for Marine headquarters suggests quite a different view of the Marines than we have ever seen pictured in the lithographic posters which invite young men to "Join the Marines and see the World". Kiper burlesques that slogan in telling about his not caring to settle down to marriage because he already has had two wives from the past two wars. He remarks to Goudy: "What did you want to come to France for? So's to see the rest of the girls. Join the Marines and see the girls--from a porthole."⁷ Flagg gives his candid opinion of war and its folly in the following lines after he receives word that the "G. One" crowd is on the way over from headquarters.

Flagg. Damn headquarters! It's some more of that world-safe-for-democracy slush! Every time they come around here I've got to ask myself is this an army or is it a stinking theosophical society for ethical culture and the Bible-backing uplift. I don't want that band of Gideons from headquarters. Now you watch that door. Watch it. In ten minutes we're going to have another of these round-headed gentlemen of the old school here giving us a prepared lecture on what we're fighting the war for and how we're to do it--one of these bill-poster chocolate soldiers with decorations running clear around to his backbone and a thrilling speech on army morale and the last drop of fighting blood that

⁵ Burns Mantle, A Treasury of the Theatre, Act II, p. 227.

⁶ p. 229.

⁷ p. 202.

puts your drive over to glorious victory! --The side-whiskered butter-eaters! I'd like to rub their noses in a few latrines I've slept in, keeping up army morale and losing men because some screaming fool back in New Jersey sector thinks he's playing with paper dolls.⁸

Numerous lines throughout the play carry similar implications as do the foregoing. No wonder there was serious objection to the presentation of such a production. The hushers-up, like munition manufacturers, and others who promoted war, preferred to have continued a romantic and glorious picture of war. Anita Block says that in addition to the clergy who objected to the play on grounds of decency that one more group surpassed all others in their protests against the play.

The most violent antagonists, however, came from the army itself. Objections were made that the play violated a section of the National Defense Act, which permitted uniforms to be worn on the stage provided nothing was done by their wearers to reflect discredit on the service. What Price Glory?, a naval officer reports, holds the United States Marine Corps and the United States Army up to ridicule and therefore curtails enlistments. ...But after three objectionable expressions had been depleted, the play ran for two hundred and ninety-nine performances.⁹

Although What Price Glory? is not considered an anti-war play by some critics it certainly is not a propaganda play for war. It is indeed a most undesirable picture and a forerunner of the plays like Journey's End by R. C. Sheriff and For Services Rendered by Somerset Maugham, anti-war plays which were some of the most popular written by Englishmen. Among the most acrid of those from the pens of Americans are Peace on Earth (1933) by George Sklar and Albert Maltz, and If This Be Treason (1935) by John Haynes Holmes and Reginald Lawrence.

⁸ p. 215.

⁹ The Changing World in Plays and Theatre, pp. 309-310.

Peace on Earth offers a very different kind of satire. The playwrights not only attack war but the bad effects which inevitably follow conflict. They denounce and scourge those who would promote war. The irony digs deeply into the economic effects of war--war for profit manifesting itself in industrial conflict. The time of the play, in a year or so, gives it a forward look. It is the first play that the Theatre Union presented. Like most of the plays of the "Leftists" it strikes a definite note of revolt.

If This Be Treason, coming from the pen of a clergyman, John Haynes Holmes, and his collaborator, Reginald Lawrence, presents a little different outlook. Reverend Holmes maintains very modern views on religion. He believes that a church should be integrated with the changing problems of life. His thesis is stated in the first paragraph of his introduction to the play. It follows:

The subject of this play is the will of the people of the world to peace. Its hero is not John Gordon, President of the United States, nor Koye, popular leader of the Japanese masses, but the common men and women whose hidden desires they express and whose latent energies they release. Its thesis is the simple proposition that if the people of any two countries involved in a war crisis were only given by their governments the same opportunity to serve the interests of war, peace and not war would come.¹⁰

The play follows in dialogue almost like a debate. The purpose of the play is thus stated:

Gordon. I'm counting on the people.

Dickinson. They're mad.

Gordon. Because they've been bitten by mad dogs. Well I've got a cure for that.

Dickinson. What cure?

¹⁰
p. v.

Gordon. I'll give them just as good a chance to get excited about peace as Brainard has given them to get excited about war.

Dickinson. People care little about peace in a situation like this.

Gordon. Did you ever stop to think, Dickinson, why people always choose war in a crisis? Because they're never given the opportunity to choose anything else. The moment trouble begins, press, politicians, pulpits start baying for war. (With great earnestness.) But what if peace has a decent chance? What if people were asked not to fight, as urgently as they are now asked to fight?¹¹

President Gordon is obviously an exponent of peace. He adheres to his purpose though at times it is very difficult. There are many satiric slants at the operation of the government, at members of Congress but when all is completed Koye, the Japanese representative of the masses, and Gordon are joined in harmony--East and West. The two men coming out of the fray clasp hands and hearts. Gordon says, "Not by might, nor power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord".¹² But all this is a dream when we consider conditions in European countries today. Let us look back to the World War and see what came from it. One of the first apparent results was the urge to seek freedom from oppression of any kind. There was a general trend of revolt. Women wished to free themselves from the drudgery of kitchens, young people believed themselves more capable than their parents to make their own decisions and solve their own problems.

Nice People (1921) is one of the first and most significant of the plays which present the jazz age. Miss Rachel Crothers tried to show the conflict between the new moral standards of a post-war jazz and liquor age. She is not blaming the young people themselves but is ridiculing a parental system which does not assume more careful scrutiny over their off-spring. The play

¹¹ Act II, pp. 67-68.

¹² Act III, p. 145.

would most properly be classified as a social comedy but it has a satirical slant at the new social order, to the degeneration of moral values. Miss Crothers does not attempt to remain behind with the kerosene lamp age but she tries to place the blame where it belongs. The very title, Nice People, is tinged with sarcasm. In the first act after the young people go out for a "joy ride" late at night Margaret and Hubert discuss the crowd. Margaret opens the conversation by saying that the guest didn't even say good-night. Hubert seems to take that for granted.

Hubert. Why these are the nicest kind of young people. Smart families--every one of them.

Margaret. That's just it. That's what makes it so horrible. If they were common little upstarts and parvenues it would be easy to understand. But nice people! What are their parents thinking of? Can't they see what it's going to do to the future generations?

Hubert. There never was a generation that grew up that didn't think the next one coming on was going to the dogs. They're freer --yes--because they are younger. But by Jove, I actually believe they are safer than the bottled up age I went through --when we had to sneak about all the deviltry we got into. They're perfectly above-board about it. You'll have to admit that. And they're going to work out their own salvation in their own way--and come out of it all right.¹³

Teddy, the daughter, is typical of this new generation. She resents being ordered about by her father. "Are you going to decide when I go to bed, too? You'd better put me on a leash, father. It would be much easier for you."¹⁴ Aunt Margaret represents the old standard of conduct and she acts as a check upon the father's utter lack of responsibility for his child as demonstrated in his giving her three cars, pearls, and a small farm. Aunt Margaret is the mouthpiece for the criticism extended to the younger genera-

¹³ M. J. Moses, Representative American Dramas, National and Local, Act I p. 458.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 461.

tion. The actions and manners of this younger generation which Aunt Margaret feared was going to "the dogs" were just the inevitable break-neck-pace in conduct that follows any war. In an excerpt from the play which appeared in Everybody's Magazine the editor preceded the condensed play by these comments showing that the conduct of the young generation was a subject much talked about.

The author holds the mirror so that all the world may see how our youngsters are deporting themselves. There's a lesson for parents in this play. Is the fact that bad manners are good form among the younger set in smart circles a dangerous tendency, or merely a passing phase to be treated humorously? Outraged clerics, college presidents and social reformers have had much to say about this, but the most interesting contribution to the argument has come from Rachel Crothers in her play Nice People.¹⁵

Among American playwrights Philip Barry has been one of the most successful in his dealing with the younger generation and the problems which confront youth. Barry, himself, was young during the war. He had first-hand information to impart, mingling as he did with revolting youth of the "flapper" age. His quest to find himself made him probe deeply into philosophy to seek an answer for all the frivolity and recklessness of restless youth. After the War young people, in spite of their sudden frivolousness, were thinking more about life than earlier generations of young people who were following the paths so well marked by their ancestors. No one understood this sudden disregard for decorum and traditional parental direction; most of all the youth himself knew not where he was heading. Montrose J. Moses, in his Representative American Plays, says of their excursion:

What they knew for certainty was that they had had enough of what they called the "older generation", which had bungled the world into a great social and economic mess; they were--in other words--out on a voyage of

¹⁵"Is There Something Wrong with Young America?", Vol. 45, Nov. 1921, p. 87.

new discovery. If they had taken anything with them in their mental kit other than rebellion, they might not have so easily fallen into morbidity. If they had been willing to pause by the roadside, to spend a week-end with themselves as they were fundamentally, and to chart the seven seas of existence, they might not have turned so violently against the life they finally came to live, after they turned against the life of the older generation. As I see it, that is the entire philosophical matrix in Philip Barry's plays.¹⁶

He presents a trilogy of youth in Paris Bound, Holiday and Hotel Universe. These plays seem to be a commentary on the life of youth of this early post-war period. Satire, especially irony, has been a familiar vein of his writing. Holiday (1928) is the most representative of his plays which satirize revolting and frivolous youth. Stark Young gives his opinion of the play in these words: "How to live happily ever after was preached in Paris Bound, and how to live at all emerges if you want it to, from Holiday."¹⁷ In Hotel Universe there is the deepest irony in youth satiated with pleasures of life and so immature. It is Linda in Holiday who found the life of a wealthy society girl so irksome. Her sister, Julia, however, accepted the vacuous social life as a traditional procedure much the same as her father did. Ned responds somewhat to the disquieting notions his sister Linda has aroused in him but he has absorbed too much alcohol to do anything to alter his life. Julia is more like her father, a naive provincial New Yorker who finds making money the great objective of living. Johnny Case, who comes into Julia's life at Lake Placid where he is trying to enjoy himself while still young, finds that he would enjoy life more with Linda. The story of Linda's revolt against her father and conventional society is a forecast of the numerous plays of rebellious youth which have deluged the market in the contemporary era of modern American drama. Linda is a more violent counterpart

¹⁶ pp. 766-767.

¹⁷ The New Republic, Vol. 57, Dec. 12, 1928, p. 96.

of Anna Christie, her predecessor. Of this severed relationship of father and daughter Stark Young says,

A whole world of surrounding pathos and irony might lie in her effect on him, on the confusion in him, on the hard shell borrowed from the life he sees around him and long sustained by an inner force that has grown barren and inflexible, of his starvation and eager naivete.¹⁸

Philip Barry does not have a manner of pushing the point in Holiday as Rachel Crothers does in Nice People. His flings are tossed delicately but with ironical certainty which burrows to the hidden depths of his facile dialogue. Edward Seton, the father, like Mr. Vanalstyne in The Henrietta, measures life and people by ticker tape. Before allowing Julia to consider herself engaged to Johnny, her father has the young man's business standing investigated and the report is rather favorable until Johnny announces that he wants to quit working when he can accumulate about "twenty nice round thousands". He says, "retire young, and work old. That's what I want to do".¹⁹ At this point he automatically begins to sever the hold he had on Julia and cuts himself entirely from her father's approval. Mr. Seton suggests that he should accept the offer he has with "Pritchard, Ames", a reliable house and work until he is forty-five when he will be a man of means. The response gives us Barry's criticism of Americans whose sole purpose of life is to attain riches. Johnny gives his views on the subject.

Johnny. I don't want to get tied-up for life quite so soon. You see, I'm a kind of queer duck, in a way. I'm afraid I'm not as anxious as I might be for things most people work toward. I don't want too much money.

Edward. Too much money?

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 97.

¹⁹ M. J. Moses, Op. Cit., Act I, p. 781.

Johnny. Well, more than I need to live by. --You see, it's always been my plan to make a few thousands early in the game, if I could, and then quit for as long as they last, and try to find out who I am and what goes on and about it--now, while I'm young, and feel good all the time.²⁰

Linda is the only one who understands Johnny. She tries to explain to Julia the folly of seeking riches and the assurance of a life of ease.

Linda. --Your future! What do you want, Julia--just security? Sit back in your feather--boa among the Worthies of the World?

Julia. Well, I'm certain that one thing I don't want, is to start this aimless discussion all over again.

Linda. But I tell you, you can't stand this sort of life forever--not if you're the person I think you are. And when it starts going thin on you, what'll you have to hold on to? --Lois Evans shot herself--why? Franny Grant's up the Hudson in a Sanatarium--why?²¹

Linda points the way to independency of youth. She revolts against her father not because she does not respect him but because he is the representative of worldly greed, of self-afflicted oppression, and of financial and conventional slavery. Her union with Johnny is inevitable. However, she is sport enough not to go with him until she is sure that Julia is not interested in him any longer. As Nora once opened the door to a world of freedom for women so Linda broke the shell which enclosed youth in a world of submission to traditions.

Francis R. Bellamy gives tribute to Barry in his handling of his various characters in so an adept manner. "The sharp shift from sincerity to irony coupled with the gift for satire and an irresistible tendency to make his characters see their own absurdities--it is these things about Mr.

²⁰ Ibid., Act II, p. 797.

²¹ Act III, p. 806.

Barry which, as in the case of the man behind us, confuse people."²² These plays of the revolt of youth in the early twenties seem rather musty today and as a result the satire is not so stinging as it was when the subject of youth's degradation was discussed by serious minded adults, social workers, teachers and clergymen.

Another subject which has lost its satiric potency for us is the question of the laxity of local government officials. One of the most representative satires upon the subject is Chicago (1926). In this play Maurine Watkins was trying to give a blanket order for the need of guidance and reform of social agencies. It is not a literary play at all but is of the Kaufman type of burlesque. The language is coarse and vulgar but in keeping with the underworld characters which are so realistically portrayed. Although tuned to melodramatic form it lampoons the local powers that be. It is a harsh indictment not only of the state and municipal authorities whose laxity encourages crime, but a censorship of the masses whose morbid interests in criminals advances the cause of illegal traffic of all kinds. Miss Watkins thrusts satiric darts in every direction. The newspapers, lawyers and employers of penal institutions are all open to her criticism. There is a boisterous but biting humor and burlesque blatancy about the whole play which seems to cover up her sharp invective.

George Jean Nathan in his introduction to the play quite heartily commends Maurine Watkins in her very original and purely American drama. He says:

²²"The Theatre", Outlook, Dec. 12, 1929, p. 11.

This "Chicago" may be described roughly as a burlesque show written by a satirically minded person. The burlesque note is constantly uppermost, though now and again one gets a hint of irony. What the author has tried to do, and has succeeded admirably in doing is to set forth a caricature of the Illinois frontier town that hides behind a mask of metropolitan civilization and that is yet actually not far removed, either geographically or spiritually, from that Illinois hell-pot called Herrin. The caricature she has contrived with an uncommon dexterity; she has fixed the essence of the Chicago of today with the skill of a dramatic Massaguer or Covarrubias.²³

The "heroine" of the play is a murderess who is exceptionally beautiful. The story is an exposition of the methods employed to save her from execution. Roxie Hart, "the prettiest woman ever charged with murder in Chicago" is the wife of Amos Hart, "her meal ticket". All of the characters in the play have satiric explanations after their names as they appear in the role. This touch takes us back to some of the early satires like Fashion.

In the prologue Roxie is discovered arguing with Fred Casely, "the other man, for the last time". After she shoots Fred she works upon the sympathy of Amos who decides to defend her by writing a confession of his guilt. Jake, the reporter for The Morning Gazette is quite pleased at getting a confession immediately. He remarks, "Yeah,--came right across with it... Sure, either crazy or knows his Chicago".²⁴ Later when Amos discovers that Roxie is not innocent he wishes to shift the blame to his wife who had told him that Casely was a burglar and climbed in their bedroom window. Jake tries to assure her that she has nothing to worry about.

Jake. ...And what's the matter with you?

Roxie. Matter? (half shrieking) Matter? Are yuh crazy?... (weeping)
They will hang me. I know they will. I killed him and--

²³p. vii-viii.

²⁴Prologue, p. 7.

Jake. What if yuh did? Ain't this Chicago? And gallant old Cook County never hung a woman yet! As a matter of fact--cold, hard statistics--it's 47 to 1 you'll go free...Why, you're not even booked yet. But suppose they do, and the coroner's jury holds you, and you're sent to jail--

Roxie. (shrieking) Jail! Jail! O God!

Jake. Save them bedewzlin tears for the jury, sister: for the jail's the best beauty treatment in town. You take the rest cure for a couple uh months at the County's expense; you lay off men and booze till when you come to trial yuh look like Miss America. And that's when the big show starts. With you for leading lady! It's a hundred to one they clear you--that's straight goods. But suppose an off-chance does happen: your lawyer will appeal and Springfield, (gnashing his teeth) dear old Springfield! will reverse the decision like that (snaps his fingers). And if they don't, there's always a pardon--and you know our Governor!--God bless him!...There you are: a thousand to one--want to bet?²⁵

The newspapers and the glory they give to criminals, and the public and their thirst for sensational news are ridiculed by Jake himself as he points to the headlines of the paper.

Jake. Here you're gettin' somethin' money can't buy: front page advertisin'...By this time tomorrow your face will be known from coast to coast. Who cares today whether you live or die? But tomorrow they'll be crazy to know your breakfast food and how did yuh rest last night. They'll fight to see you, come by the hundred just for a glimpse of your house--Remember Wanda Stopa? Well, we had twenty thousand at her funeral.²⁶

When Roxie arrives at the jail she receives a warm welcome from the jolly matron who tries to be firm. Roxie tells her that she is accustomed to the service of a maid and breakfast in bed. The matron replies: "Well, yuh got-ta get up for your breakfast--that's rules--but yuh can have it brought in, from Wooster's just around the corner. Anything yuh want, only twenty dollars a week. And we'll all three eat together!"²⁷ The third person is

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 13-14.

²⁶ p. 15.

²⁷ Act I, p. 31

another murderess who receives a great deal of help from the matron in preparation for her trial. The matron believes the "girls" should always look their best. Mr. Flynn, the attorney for Roxie exemplifies the cunning of certain criminal lawyers. He is interested in the case for only one reason. When Amos cannot collect the full amount for the legal fee Flynn expresses himself in no mild terms.

Amos. I'll give you notes with interest--double--till ever' cent--

Flynn. No, you don't. None uh that installment stuff. I wouldn't be bothered with your chicken-feed. I play square, Hart, dead square. When you came to me yesterday I didn't say, "Is she innocent, is she guilty, will it be an easy case or a hard one?" Nothing like that, now did I! No. I said: "Have you got five thousand dollars?" and you said "Yes". (Eyes him in contempt) You dirty liar!...And I took your case--and I'll keep it. But she'll rot in jail before I bring it to trial.²⁸

The play seems to drag through out the scene in jail. There is too much repetition which was probably used for emphasis or to give the play three act possibility. The final touch at the end, when Roxie poses for her picture, gives new life to the play, and the last act ends with a direct thrust at the common masses who clamor for the newest sensation. When a shot is heard after Roxie has been acquitted, her fond admirers soon leave her to go to a new scene of crime.

The bold and daring of the playwright to criticize a definite city or state points toward an even greater audacity which is so apparent in later plays like I'd Rather Be Right and many plays of the "leftists". The plays might well represent similar conduct in other cities but it was most appropriately named "Chicago" during an era when "Al Capone" and his ilk were such powerful forces not only in Chicago, but all over the country.

²⁸Ibid., p. 40.

The Famous Mrs. Fair (1919) written by James Forbes does not introduce a completely new after-the-war trend but carries on the idea of the much discussed subject of "women's place" as suggested in earlier plays like Hoyt's Contented Woman (1897) and Crothers' He and She (1911). These plays are of the standard type while The Famous Mrs. Fair is more of the problem of a whole family suffering because the mother, shortly returned from the War, prefers to establish herself in a career instead of in a home. The satiric sting of the play is not pronounced today when women find employment in almost every field of endeavor. The other women members of the same unit to which Mrs. Fair belonged also found life at home very dull after the war. These lines give the keynote to the play. Nancy (Mrs. Fair) opens the conversation.

- Nancy. Now, girls, tell me and tell me true: How does it feel to be home? (There is silence) Don't everybody shriek with joy at once!
- Mrs. Wynne. Seems to me I've been home a million years.
- Mrs. Perrin. After a couple of days with my kiddies, I sigh for the peace and quiet of an air raid.
- Mrs. Brown. You're in luck to have them. I've been driven to card-index my hens!
- Mrs. Converse. I wish you'd come over and card-index my Swede!
- Mrs. Wells. I must confess that after I had kissed my old man and all the grandchildren, they looked sort of strange to me.
- Nancy. Girls, this sounds awful! Possibly Alan was right. He said I would find it flat.
- Mrs. Wynne. After being on the hop, skip and jump for four years, it's the very devil to sit around "Bla".
- Mrs. Perrin. Have you any plans?
- Nancy. I had thought of buying all the clothes in New York, seeing all the shows, playing around with my family...
- Mrs. Converse. We've done all that and then what?

Nancy. Why, eh--

Mrs. Perrin. Exactly. "Why, eh--"

Mrs. Brown. You see Nancy, now we have time to burn and no matches.

Nancy. What are all the other war workers doing?

Mrs. Brown. Kicking about being demobilized.

Nancy. It's a burning shame that Washington couldn't have used all this organized talent.

Mrs. Wells. Oh, what could you expect from Congress?²⁹

The play is a character satire rather than a caricature. It is done quite seriously. Some other plays which are related to The Famous Mrs. Fair are Lee Wilson Dodd's The Changelings (1923) and Lewis Beach's The Goose Hangs High (1924).

Plays written in the expressionistic manner became popular after the war. Many of them were satiric or ironic. The subject matter is generally social or psychological. Eugene O'Neill was one of the chief exponents of this method of playwriting which was adapted from the German procedure. The Hairy Ape (1922) is an outcry against oppression and class distinction. Yank is a crude and powerful stoker on a luxury liner. He is content with his lot until a beautiful and wealthy girl comes down into the very bowels of the ship on an inspection tour. Their eyes meet and it is a clash of the classes. Neither one sees in the other being the counterpart of anyone he has ever seen before. The clash is between the luxurious life of the rich as opposed to the laborious life of the poor. Yank had up to this time believed that he "belonged". He believed that his services were indispensable. It is at this point that realism is forgotten and the scenes become more and more fantastic, more and more ironical. We see things not in photographic

²⁹Montrose Moses, Op. Cit., Act I, p. 393.

imagery but from the distorted view of Yank's mind. There are the elaborate Fifth Avenue shops with their luxuriant articles tagged with outlandish prices which reach astronomical figures. Later the wandering stoker is ejected from a meeting of radicals because he isn't sure if he can agree with them. He sees the vast congregation pouring forth from a fashionable church. On he wanders unable to fit into any of the pictures he sees. He does not seem to belong until he goes to the zoo where an ape thrusts his arm out. At last he believes that he has found a brother to welcome. But it is only an illusion. The long hairy arm of the ape draws Yank close and crushes him to death. The general interpretation of the play is that it is an attack upon the injustices of capitalism. But there is a deeper ironic current beneath the various symbols. Again O'Neill, disparaged by his own fruitless quest to find himself, resorts to the solace of the sea, away from a disordered world whose inhabitants have missed the real things in life. The play is more significant today than it was when it was written. Long scolding passages are peculiar to it. A short excerpt from one of these passages will explain O'Neill's attitude of life as uttered through Yank's role.

Hell in de stokehole? Sure it takes a man to work in hell. Hell, sure, dat's my fav'rite climate. I eat it up! I git fat on it! It's me makes it hot! It's me makes it roar! It's me makes it move! Sure on'y for me everything stops...I'm at de bottom, get me! Dere ain't nothin' foither. I'm de end!...I'm what makes iron into steel! Steel, dat stands for de whole ting. And I'm steel--steel--steel! I'm de muscles in steel, de punch behind it!³⁰

This self confident attitude of Yank is only a sham. It is ironical. It is merely a defense mechanism. It is revenge for that part of society to which

³⁰ Charles H. Whitman, Representative Modern Dramas, Scene i, p. 839.

Mildred belongs. The stoker loathes her and the powers which she represents. The most effective accent of the play is the combination of realistic materials in a highly unimaginative manner. It is the symbolism which pervades every scene which makes possible the acrid satirical tone of the play.

Dynamo (1929) is another expressionistic play in which O'Neill continues the mad search to find himself. The electric power with which the frustrated young man kills himself is not only a symbol of power and strength but it is a new scientific force which points toward hope and progress.

Elmer Rice's Adding Machine (1923) sounds a louder cry against the perverted social order. It is still one of the best examples of our expressionistic plays and is definitely satiric. The titles, as in so many of the earlier satires, bear sardonic stress. Mr. Zero is a de-personalized entity who performs like a robot the routine duties exacted by a harsh, commercial civilization. The other characters, known by numbers from one to six, do not rise much above Zero in his inability to soar above pure mechanical operations. In the opening scene Zero's wife in her long nagging speech uttered in a "stream of consciousness" manner at the beginning of the play is a drab and ineffective helpmate. Her scolding is pure invective of Mr. Rice's order. In her complaints she gives a few thrusts at the moving picture industry. She is "sick o' them Westerns" but likes the sweet sentimental stories. Mr. Zero merely prepares himself for bed silently and then retires. She continues in a long tirade, part of which follows:

"Don't miss it, Mrs. Zero", Mrs. Eight was tellin' me...The Eights seen it downtown at the St&and. They go downtown all the time. Just like us--nit! I guess by the time it gets to the Peter Stuyvesant all that part about kickin' in the door will be cut out. Just like they cut the big cabaret scene in "The Price of Virtue". They sure are pullin' some rough stuff in the pictures nowadays. "It's no place for a young girl", I was tellin' Mrs. Eleven, only the other day...³¹

Then she remonstrates with herself for having married Zero.

If I'd a had any sense, I'd a' known what you were from the start...I wish I had it to do over again. I hope to tell you. You was goin' to do wonders, you was! You wasn't goin' to be a bookkeeper long--oh, no, not you. Wait till you got started,--you was goin' to show 'em. There wasn't no job in the store that was too big for you. Well, I've been waitin'...Twenty-five years tomorrow! Twenty-five years in the same job an' never missed a day.³²

The expressionism is more pronounced in the later scenes. Zero is always the nonentity in all of them. Even in the graveyard scene at the end he is a hopeless failure, he cannot entreat heaven to admit him and thus he is on his way back to earth to try again. The clicking of the adding machine in the seventh scene emphasizes the tone of the play just as in a number of the O'Neill plays. Objective symbols are employed to permeate the plots and accompany the messages. In Anna Christie it was the "old devil sea", in The Emperor Jones we hear the monotonous beat of the tom-tom, and the repeated cry of steel in The Hairy Ape.

In the last scene Lieutenant Charles emphasizes the futility of the plodding of Mr. Zero who is just one of millions of zeros in the world who in their nullity will be replaced by machinery. Charles comments:

You're a failure, Zero, a failure. A waste product. A slave to a contraption of steel and iron. The animal's instincts, but not his strength and skill. The animal's appetites, but not his unashamed indulgence of them. True you eat and digest and excrete and reproduce. But any microscopic organism can do as much. Well time's up! Back you go--back to your sunless groove--the raw material of slums and wars--the ready prey of the first jingo or demagogue or political adventurer who takes the trouble to play upon your ignorance and credulity and provincialism. You poor, spineless, brainless boob--I'm sorry for you!³³

³² Ibid.

³³ Scene vii, p. 606.

In 1924 George S. Kaufman and Marc Connelly gave us one of their finest plays in Beggar on Horseback, an expressionistic drama which was suggested by Paul Apel's Hans Sonnenstossers Hollen fahrt. The English interpretation of the piece is "Johnny Sunstormer's Trip to Hell". It is similar to the Adding Machine in its speedy and concentrated technique but unlike it in subject matter and content. The playwrights strike at mass production and present the fantastic idea of a factory constructed to put out an efficient mass of literature, poetry and music. Kaufman and Connelly ridicule gross materialism. They laugh at triviality of mind and soul which results in unconscious honesty and stupidity. Ludwig Lewishon says:

To keep the mood of laughter vivid at every moment, however, they have fitted their extraordinary inclusive biting satire of the life about them into an imaginative frame-work that was ready to their hand...The result is a dramatic work which though wholly imitative in structure and method, is as wholly original in creative substance. ...The Cady family reach a kind of greatness. Of course we are dealing with satire and figures are stripped of all but essentials.³⁴

With gaiety the collaborators have written this derisive comedy. It is a dream play with a satiric thrust at Rotarian America. Alexander Woolcott says, "It is a small and facetious disturbance in the rear of the Church of the Gospel of Success. When staged in the very capitol of the Land of Getters, its gesture is as defiant as that made on a not dissimilar occasion by one Barbara Frietchie."³⁵

The satire is more effective and subdued than in the usual farcical productions of Kaufman and Connelly. They resort to symbolism to show the baseness of striving for material gains without having achieved success through effort. After being sentenced, Mr. Cady, who sings a little ditty,

³⁴"Inferno", Nation, Feb. 27, 1924, p. 238.

³⁵Preface, p. ii.

shows the power and influence of money. He falls into rhythmic measure.

Cady. You take our money and you live our life,
We own you, we own you.
You take our money and you live our way,
We pay the piper and we tell him what to play,
You sold your soul and you can't get away,
We own you, we own you. ...

Neil. Until I die! I can be free from you if I die! I can die. You
can't keep me from it! That's how I can get away from you!
Open the door! Open the door!³⁶

John Howard Lawson has done some expressionistic work, too. Roger Bloomer (1923) was a play of this type which met with very little success. His Processional (1925) on the contrary became one of the most discussed plays of the season. It was well saturated in symbolism but it also resorted to the cartoon type in its stabs at politics. Mr. Lawson tells in the preface to the play what his purpose is in writing it. He states:

I have endeavored in the present play, to lay the foundation of some sort of native technique, to reflect to some extent color and movement of the American processional as it streams about us. The rhythm is staccato, burlesque, carried out by a formalized arrangement of jazz music.³⁷

Lawson according to his own statement, regarding his method of attack, claims that his play is not a direct attempt at expressionism. He said in the preface to the play, "I have endeavored to create a method which shall express the American scene in native idiom, a method far removed from the older realism as from the facile mood of Expressionism."³⁸ Whatever his attempts were he did get a strange mixture of dramatic forms which most aptly served his purpose. Joseph Wood Krutch recognizes the various dramatic forms which are well blended into a single procession of contemporary American characters.

³⁶ Part II, p. 223.

³⁷ p. ix.

³⁸ p. v.

Mr. Krutch says in The American Drama Since 1918:

Basing his technique now upon the expressionistic drama, now upon the rough caricature of vaudeville, he mingled tragedy and satire, pathos and burlesque into a phantasmagoria of diverse elements which does somehow suggest both the wild disorder of contemporary life and the emotional exasperation which it produces.³⁹

Processional is an attempt to mirror a confused state of mind but it does not reach the levels of Aldous Huxley or James Joyce. In Lawson's hero we find an almost realistic character while the lesser roles are either blurred in symbolism or they are unpolished caricatures. There are national types, too, as a Polish laborer who spares no words to give a continuous exposition of the history of the workmen, a man in a silk hat who raps the newspapers for their sensational reports. Phillpots remarks that he thinks he understands news values. He reads very thoughtfully.

"Plague Decimates China"... "Names Ape as Co-respondent in Sensational Divorce"... "Ireland"... there's a green place... "Man Stung on Head by Wasp dies Immediately"... "Italian Woman Has Six Children at Once"... and they grew up to be stung on the head... that's news for you and this is the center of where coal is made, because coal is power and power drives--⁴⁰

The whole play rambles on almost irrelevantly, now flinging darts at politics now at various officials, as well as the Ku Klux Klan. Here are some of the lines from it.

King Keagle. We gather this night to protect morals. (The group grumble and grunt ominously.) Native-born Americans, Patriotic Protestants, regular citizens.

Responsive Chant. Glory... Glory...

King Keagle. Have you taken the oath to exterminate foreigners?

Responsive Chant. God's will be done.

³⁹
p. 241.

⁴⁰ Act III, p. 111.

King Keagle. Are the tar and feathers all ready?

Responsive Chant. God's will be done!

King Keagle. Are the guns and knives on hand?

Responsive Chant. (very loud) God's will be done!⁴¹

The most daring indictment follows. It is a gross exaggeration but not entirely without some foundation at the time the play was written. King Keagle after attempting to restore order, cries out, "I wish to announce, entire Congress of the United States joined the Ku Klux Klan last night".⁴² And so the lines run; a broad commentary of our "democratic American life".

Lawson's lines have more than social criticism in them. A direct leaning to the left will be discovered if one reads other works of his. His radical beliefs are less pronounced in the earlier pieces. He is the connecting link between the old and the revolutionary theatre. Mr. Krutch gives some interesting information on the emergence of the political theatre at the beginning of the third decade of the twentieth century. Some time before that the Washington Square Players and the playwrights and actors of the Provincetown Group emerged and they were known as "radical". Today they would be considered less revolutionary; merely exponents of free art. Mr. Krutch says,

They were homogeneous only to the extent that all dissenters were good humoredly accepted by all others for no reason except the fact that their opinions were, in any event, not conventional,...The rise of Communism changed all that not merely because it made specific doctrines so important that the Communist radical soon came to hate all other radicals even more vehemently than he hated members of the bourgeoisie, but also because he had come to regard that aestheticism to which many of his former fellows had been attracted as a peculiarly vicious form of decadence and now proclaimed, not the freedom of art, but the doctrine that art was above "all weapon".⁴³

⁴¹ Act IV, pp. 182-183.

⁴² Ibid., p. 183.

⁴³ Op. Cit., pp. 228-229.

He adds that "Mr. Lawson went over to the Communist group, but has achieved no great success with any of the plays written to preach its doctrine".⁴⁴

The left wing theatre developed and became very popular during the early years of the depression. The movement began in the East but spread rapidly throughout the country. Mr. Maltz, who is a sympathizer of the movement, praises the work of the "Leftists" in an article which appeared in the New Republic. He particularly accounts for the Theatre Union which he claims will endeavor to produce plays written for the mass of people, the working people and the people as a class. He said in 1935:

For some years now amateur workers' theatres have been increasing and gaining in strength. With the propulsion of the professional worker's theatres behind it, this movement is developing with a speed rivaling that of the little theatre movement a decade ago. Throughout the United States today there are hundreds of New Theatres. --many are so named-- dedicated to plays that say something about the society we live in, that mirror the struggles of the working class, that cry for change.⁴⁵

That was in 1935 that he seemed so hopeful. But Mr. Krutch does not find in 1939 that the "leftists" have been very successful, especially in the last two years or so. However, Pins and Needles is one exception. The low priced seats and the topical matter appealed to not only the mass of workers but to more general audiences who supported this performance for many months. In some instances the working groups were given complimentary tickets in order to encourage attendance at some of these productions sponsored by the labor groups. Some of the groups even lived together, sharing the expenses as well as the profits taken from the performances. In spite of all this the "leftist" theatres suffered by the interferences of various censorships just as they had prospered with the aid of various union groups who often supported

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 229.

⁴⁵ "Left Wing Theatre in America", New Republic, July 24, 1935, p. 302.

them in nine and ten week runs.

The plays of these "leftists" are generally not so successful in the commercial theatres because the subject matter is either uninteresting or annoying to most of the theatre-goers who are willing to pay up to \$3.50 for seats. However, more than a few of the little theatres have successfully tried out some of the works of the "leftist" playwrights.

The chief exponents of these labor theatres are John Howard Lawson, Clifford Odets, Marc Blitzstein, Irwin Shaw, Albert Bein, John Wexley, George Sklar and Albert Maltz. Most of their plays sound a note of social criticism. Frequently they are propaganda plays, shading from the delicate tones of criticism of the social order to the blatant communistic discord. Few of them are written without some satirical strain. The subject matter of these plays is associated with conditions of poverty, unemployment, labor problems, political strife, social injustices, and communistic sublimity. In form these dramatic productions of the "leftists" range from a revue like Pins and Needles to the semi-expressionistic types like Bury the Dead. Almost all of them strike a satiric note or sustain an ironic overtone.

As carriers of propaganda, these plays are often considered destructive and consequently not attended by many of the masses. The term propaganda is usually repulsive in connection with literature or drama because it is generally thought of as an attempt to break down faith in what are generally accepted as truths. There are many who actually believe that plays in accord with their own views are not propaganda. Frank Hurburt O'Hara would have us look in both directions.

The leftists are the group we usually think of as propagandists, although this is hardly a fair judgment, because those on the right are just as keen to bring their own views to pass, or to prevent others

from bringing their views to pass, as the most left of the leftists. Moreover, the rightists are just as prone to deal directly with the social order.⁴⁶

Since most of us do not wish to be directed either on the stage or off the stage we are inclined to conclude that what we don't care for is propaganda. Strictly and broadly speaking most plays can be termed propaganda plays since the playwright advances his viewpoint and ideas through the words or actions of his characters. It is generally his purpose if not to move us to action, to at least win us to his way of thinking. But isn't this propaganda? If we are so convinced and like a play we attempt to avoid tagging it as propaganda. Some of the great plays of the past have born the stamp of propaganda although we do not consider them in that light because we are so removed from the times and circumstances which they depict. Uncle Tom's Cabin was definite propaganda to the Southerners, and to those residing in the North it has always been just a great play with a strong human appeal. Who can determine how the most radical of the present day leftist's plays may be interpreted fifty or even twenty-five years from now?

The fact that the bulk of these plays emphasize society as a syndicate and not as individuals, tends to make many of them, with their fine constructive social criticism, appear to be communal and therefore objectionable and destructive. Bearing such stigma they do not meet with much success beyond the boards of the Union Theatre and sometimes Federal Works Theatres. Library records show, however, that those which have been published are widely read. Some of them are well written and are significant contributions to the field of American drama. Whatever their worth may be from the literary standpoint or their potency as propaganda it is certain they are pointing

⁴⁶Op. Cit., p. 245.

toward a greater freedom of expression in the American theatre of tomorrow.

Although the plays of the "leftists" are all very similar in subject matter they vary greatly in manner of presentment. Some of them forsake character and action and emphasize the speech as from a public rostrum, a pulpit or even the proverbial soapbox. John Wexley in They Shall Not Die (1934) reaches bitter invective in some of his lengthy harangues on race prejudices and legalized lynching. While Wexley cites the Negro as the abused victim of social and economic injustice he is subtly accusing those who are intolerant of other racial groups, especially the Jew. The use of the lengthy discourse in modern plays, as we have also noted in Yank's role in The Hairy Ape and Mrs. Zero in The Adding Machine, seems to be a revival of the old soliloquy of the classic ages.

They Shall Not Die (1934) is a very caustic criticism of the super-legal code of southern racial prejudice, as exhibited in the Scottsboro case of a "Southern State". John Wexley, the playwright, was so stirred by the injustice of the legal proceedings that he dramatized this noted case of nine Negro boys who were convicted and condemned to electrocution without sufficient evidence because they were "niggers". The first act portrays the waywardness of constituted authority in their neglect of the dingy, dirty "Cokesville" county jail. Quite a different picture compared with the Cook County Jail which was described in Chicago as a rather high class rest resort.

The case centers on the supposed attack of two white girls by a band of Negro boys. When the girls are questioned in the jail by the prosecuting attorney Mason, and Sheriff Trent, we note the bitter criticism of the intolerance and prejudice in some of the southern states. Trent is in a rage when

Mason seems doubtful about the girls' attack. Mason believes that any action on their part was voluntary. Trent doesn't seem to care what their past has been. He shouts:

...they're white women! You think I'm gonna let them stinkin' nigger lice get away from me? Like hell I am! They're gonna git whut's comin' to 'em long as I'm the law round heah...What the hell will folks say of us...? Why they'll spit on us if we don't git them niggers when we get the chance...The hull county, the hull State, the hull South'll be down on our huids...⁴⁷

The bitter irony of these words is felt when the girls whisper to each other of their own guilt before they go for their physical examination. Virginia, the worthless girl tries to cheer Lucy who has been mislead.

Virginia. ...Yuh jest leave it to me Lucy. Ain't I got us out of scrapes befo'?

Lucy. ...I'm so scarec, Ginny. I'll lose my job sho' enough, if they hear this goin's on...⁴⁸

The girls are cotton spinners who are paid so little for their services that they have run away to seek better jobs. They were in the company of six white kid hoboes who were thrown off the train by a band of Negro boys. The Negroes are apparently not guilty but are immediately accused because they are black. There is sharp criticism against an economic system which thrives on the low wages of such unfortunate girls. There is also censorship of political intrigue which is demonstrated in the role of the shrewd solicitor who is interested in the outcome of the case to advance his own political position.

The innocent Negroes deny their guilt but so beaten and abused are they that eventually terrorized from torture they confess and are at once convicted. At the end of the play there is promise of action in the final speech

⁴⁷ Act I, p. 20.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 21.

of Rubin, the great criminal lawyer of New York. Rubin shouts:

No...we're not finished. We're only beginning. I don't care how many times you try to kill this Negro boy...I'll go with Joe Rokoff to the Supreme Court up in Washington and back again...If I have to do it in a wheel-chair...and if I do nothing else in my life, I'll make the fair name of this state stink to high heaven with its lynch justice...these boys, they shall not die!⁴⁹

Not only does Rubin promise corrective action but he does what so many playwrights fail to do; that is offer a solution to the problem. Mr. Wexley suggests what action can be taken by sympathetic humanitarians.

The bitterness of They Shall Not Die is less pronounced in Marc Blitzstein's satirical operetta The Cradle Will Rock (1938). Eleanor Flexner says, "The most recent development in social drama is along the lines of musical satire. its first example was Parade...presented by the Theatre Guild to its refined subscription audience in much diluted form."⁵⁰

Blitzstein's operetta attracted a great deal of attention due to the fact that it was scheduled to appear as a Federal Theatre production and then suddenly banned. But Orson Welles and John Houseman, the producers, refused to submit to the plan and hired a dingy theatre and presented the play without props of any kind to a cheering audience. After that the play was produced without scenery in all subsequent performances. Like Our Town it proved to hold the audience despite the fact that they faced a bare stage. In the foreward to the play Archibald MacLeish deplores the fact that most audiences act as a hinderance to the development of the playwright. He compares the general audience to a beast with but one desire; that is to feel, not think. He says, "What is necessary therefore for the playwright who wishes to write truly and honestly and in form of art is to destroy this audience...and

⁴⁹ Act III, p. 191.

⁵⁰ American Playwrights, 1918-1938, pp. 306-307.

change it back to men and women who will think and judge."⁵¹

Mr. Blitzstein is as bitter at heart over economic and social conditions as Wexley but he mingles humor with his cutting caricatures. Occasionally he is almost cheerful and hopeful in this satiric cantata of contemporary society. The play has a poetic touch and such modern devices as allegory and expressionism. There is not so much story as there are snatch bits of harsh criticism of various objects of satire shown in certain scenes as: Street-corner Nightcourt, Lawn of Mr. Mister and seven other scenes. The action of the play takes place in Steeltown on the night of a union drive. A few lines taken from the play will illustrate more concretely what the play is like. Larry says:

Yeh, lynch, kill:
Listen once for all, you scared bunch of nimmies,
Outside in the square they're startin' somethin'
That's gonna tear the cat-gut out of your stinkin' rackets!
That's Steel marchin' out in front! But one day there's gonna be
Wheat...and sidewalks...
Cows...and music...
Shops...houses...
Poems...bridges...drugstores...
The people of this town are findin' out what it's all about...⁵²

Clifford Odets has been praised and condemned at the same time for several of his plays. One of his finest plays is Awake and Sing which has a human touch. Till the Day I Die shows Mr. Odets entirely given over to Communism. A young German Communist who has survived the tortures of the Nazi troopers is the heroine. He reestablished his reputation in Golden Boy (1937). The story is about a young Italian boy who abandons his fiddle for the prize ring because there's money in it and with money he can forget his

⁵¹
p. 7.

⁵²Scene x, p. 148.

embittered youth. The play is a simple allegory. The prize fight is symbolic of that great fight in which we are all participating. Golden Boy wishes to find a place in the world as an individual. He wishes to free himself of the scorn that is attached to "nobodies", and become someone even if he must abandon the development of his real self. It is a conflict of the individual expressed in the two opposing symbols, the fiddle and the fist. The irony of the play expressed in these lines shows the struggle Golden Boy under-goes before attaining what the world calls success. He says:

With music I'm never alone when I'm alone--Playing music...that's like saying, "I am man. I belong here. How do you do, World--good evening!" When I play music nothing is closed to me. I'm not afraid of people and what they say. There's no war in music. It's not like the streets. Does this sound funny?...But when you leave your room...down in the street...it's war! Music can't help me there. Understand...People have hurt my feelings for years. I never forget. You can't get even with people by playing the fiddle. If music shot bullets I'd like it better--artists and people like that are freaks today. The world moves fast and they sit around like forgotten dopes.⁵³

Elmer Rice gives a complete summary of the ills of the world in America today in his We, the People (1933). It is a bitter expression of the aftermath of war, namely, the depression. There are twenty scenes depicting his own pet grievances. He flings his arrows in every direction. Some hit the war, the capitalist's war for profit, by presenting a poor shell-shocked drunkard; others are aimed at the police as agents of suppression. He pierces deeply into the hardened hearts of the financial giants of industry who buy up the nomination of our Presidents. Then he rants at those who bear racial hatred for the Jew and Negro in this country. Others, like the hard-working teacher are unable to get married because neither the girl nor her fiancé has enough income to establish a home. There is, toward the end, the

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Act I, Scene iv, pp. 71-72.

sympathy for the poor boy, Allen Davis, who shot a policeman who arrested him because he talked against the government. His last prayer is for a re-organized America in which all men will be free and equal. There are long tirades in this play as in several other radical ones. Rice's complaint is voiced by Sloane in the last speech of the play when he shouts:

"To promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty"-- Does that mean millions without employment or the means to provide themselves with food and shelter? We are the people, ladies and gentlemen, we--you and I and everyone of us. It is our house: this America. Let us cleanse it and put it in order and make it a decent place for decent people to live in.⁵⁴

There is nothing of the symbolic message in this, just out-spoken language. Other plays have been written about various social problems following the depression and financial loss, but these, here selected, are some of the most daring and most representative of productions presented by the labor groups. O'Neill made a similar attack in his Street Scene (1929) and Maxwell Anderson in Saturday's Children (1927). Although this latter play preceded the depression it centers upon a young couple who tried to get along on too meager a salary. Their troubles and the wife's infidelity follows. Their constant nagging and scrimping causes the breach. Tragic irony germinates in the squalor of the slums.

One of the latest trends in playwriting seems to be in historic or semi-historic subjects with a deep under flow of irony or satiric implications. The American Way (1939) written by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart is a rather pretty piece of sentimental patriotism but regardless of its literary value it illustrates the present tendency of playwrights to make the unsuspecting Americans more conscious of their priceless possession, a home

⁵⁴ Scene xx, p. 253.

of democratic freedom, peace and comfort. They can only preserve it for themselves by being alert and watchful and always grateful for a home of freedom, while other countries are torn asunder and cringe at the feet of savage egoists.

The opening scene is at Ellis Island where a hopeful but very excited crowd of Americans are waiting to be admitted to the great land of promise. The babel of foreign tongues is the significant keynote. There are Italians, Russians, Portuguese, Germans and others, of all ages; some timid, some more forward in the anxiety to begin life again. As the crowd emerges over the gang plank the figures of the foreigners are seen mingling and blending in with the figures of their adopted brothers. Martin and his wife Irma, who have immigrated from Germany, are followed through in their trials, tribulations, struggles, defeats and victories as representative of the kind of manpower it took to make our nation what it has come to be since 1896 when they first stepped from the gang plank. Every major historic event of the past forty years is traced in retrospect. Martin begins his labors as a woodworker and gradually becomes rich. The war comes and he loses a son. When the chief bank of the town is about to fail he gives his money freely to save it. He is an ideal citizen; the kind who made America. All through the play there is a deep undertone of criticism and irony. His grandson cannot get married because of unemployment and Martin pleads with him not to be swayed by the false forces of the outside. Therein is a warning to those who hold the reins of our country to keep the driving under control. The outside forces are probably those representatives of Hitler and other inhuman dictators who are growing in numbers right in our midst. The deepest irony is apparent in the young grandson's determination to join the American Nazis in

whose hands Martin gives his life. The last scene shows the funeral procession coming to halt as Samuel Brockton steps forward and says:

To you his fellow townspeople, who have come to say farewell to Martin Gunther, I would say that you may bid him farewell not only sorrowfully but also joyously. Martin Gunther lived with tolerance and peace among his neighbors. He had a deep and simple faith in the goodness of his fellow men, and he died fighting for that which he felt gave meaning to life--for that which made it rich and beautiful--Freedom. He died for the thing he loved--his country.⁵⁵

Then Karl breaks out hysterically:

Grandpa! Grandpa! It wasn't all for nothing. If you only know that! If you could only know that!⁵⁶

Irma places her comforting arm on her grandson's arm and Brockton continues:

To Martin Gunther we pay a just homage. For it may be truly said he was an American...I see in the life of Martin Gunther, and even in his death, high hope for America...Let us keep this land of ours, which we love so dearly, a land of hope and freedom.⁵⁷

One of the finest plays as well as one of the most popular ones which follow the present historical trend is Robert E. Sherwood's Abe Lincoln in Illinois (1939). It is not a satire by any means; it is too serious and fine a work for that category but it has a very significant strain of social and political criticism and warning which borders upon irony. Mr. Frank Hurburt O'Hara delves into its more serious and critical elements in his Today in American Drama. He sees more than the portrait of Lincoln as we have looked upon it for many years. He says:

...Abe Lincoln in Illinois speaks for contemporary America through the scenes, and frequently through the words of yesterday. When Lincoln debates with Douglas, he talks about textile workers of Massachusetts in phrases which might have been lifted from this week's journal of current opinion. The effect of his speech upon the audience is to under-

⁵⁵ Act II, pp. 153-154.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

score a present-day situation of which the audience is already aware. Probably no one in contemporary life could speak with so much authority on this problem of today as Lincoln spoke in the words of yesterday, because he speaks as a prophet who is felt by many to have vindicated his authority to speak.⁵⁸

Sherwood sees Lincoln throughout the whole play as wavering, uncertain of the future even at the end when he boards the train for Washington. His whole career seems, somehow, to fit into the picture of our country today. His caution and care in making decisions is a warning and a satiric thrust at our present national leaders. A hasty unstudied decision might cost us our liberty today. The Lincoln-Douglas debate reminds us of the need of weighing well and fighting in the open our grave national problems. Lincoln's uncertainty of entering public life when he was in Salem, Illinois, his fear of winning the presidency, and on the other hand, fear of not being elected, his doubt as to whether he should marry Mary Todd and finally his uncertainty of the future seem to parallel our own times. Uncertainty is a by-word today; caution should be the watchword.

Lincoln's was the ponderous legal mind which weighed matters carefully and judiciously. On the question of slavery Douglas represents the "left wingers" who are surging about us today in "sheep's clothing". Douglas represents false reasoning and hasty decision. Lincoln, with caution and diplomacy, refuted all that Douglas claimed. At the end of his response he said:

In his final words tonight, the Judge said that we may be "the terror of the world". I don't think we want to be that. I think we prefer to be the encouragement of the world, the proof that man is at last worthy to be free. But we shall provide no such encouragement, unless we can establish our ability as a nation to live and grow. And we shall surely do neither if these states fail to remain united. There can be no dis-

⁵⁸
p. 103.

inction in the definition of liberty as between one section and another, one race and another, one class and another. "A house divided against itself cannot stand." This government cannot endure permanently, half slave and half free!⁵⁹

These words seem to be ironically prophetic of our present day struggles between the loyal Americans and those who are insidiously spreading their false doctrines in an effort to undermine our national faith in democratic principles. Our danger of disunion is an even more serious one now than slavery was in those days. Lincoln's last words when he was about to board the train for Washington, seem to be more significant now than when he uttered them. In the gravity of his new position as President during a period when eleven states have seceded from the union, he says:

It is a grave duty which I now face...We gained democracy, and now there is the question whether it is fit to survive. Perhaps we have come to the dreadful day of awakening, and the dream is ended.⁶⁰

Mr. Sherwood did a much more effective job in going back to the former days of Lincoln to bring us to some serious thinking today than if he chose some living exponent of democratic principles to preach world disorder and the need for maintaining permanent peace.

There are other plays embodying ironic implications of present day problems which have come in the wake of the first World War. But none seems more timely, nor appropriate as a conclusion to this chapter than Abe Lincoln in Illinois. Its message is one that links our great periods of war and warns that history does repeat itself.

⁵⁹ Robert E. Sherwood, Abe Lincoln in Illinois, Act III, Scene ix, p. 140.

⁶⁰ Act III, Scene xii, pp. 182-183.

CONCLUSION

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It is difficult to estimate how influential satiric dramas are either in affecting the opinions of audiences, or in moving them to action. Most people who attend the theatre today go with definite convictions beforehand concerning the problems of society. Therefore, it is not an easy task for either playwrights or actors, to sway them. For the most part audiences are alert and wary of indoctrination or preaching. This is an age of suspicion as well as one of frankness and uncertainty. If a play leans too far to the left most members of an audience or readers of the written production gasp in fear that it is purely propaganda. But if it conforms with their own ideas they chuckle and declare it to be very clever. That is, a drama is often persuasive to those who are already persuaded.

It is impossible to measure or determine in any exact terms how satiric plays have influenced American audiences or readers. We can at best merely conjecture results by observing the possible purposes of the playwrights in their use of satire and the objective consequences, if any. Some productions lend themselves to this procedure more than others. It is in plays in which the playwright has satirized social problems of the masses, political corruption, conflict between classes, or the folly of war, that any action or results may be recognized. We have seen in the foregoing chapters how the use of satire in dramatic production has been in recent years centered more upon the problems of the masses and less and less upon the individual.

In order to judge how effective satire is in these types of plays we must place ourselves before and behind the footlights. The playwright uses satire consciously or unconsciously. When he uses it fully aware of what he

is doing his motives are varied. He may wish to entertain, to instruct, to correct, to further selfish interests, to warn, to move to action, or to solve a problem, the solution of which is often left to the audience. When he is more conscious of developing a strong character and seeing it through to a logical end, his efforts may be resolved into a satirical study of a specific type of character, without his striving for any satirical effect at all. The latter procedure usually results in convincing the audience more readily than in a method whereby the playwright produces more obvious satire. Audiences prefer to do some independent thinking by solving the problem themselves. The label "a satiric musical comedy" or "an ironic and stirring drama", somehow leaves nothing unsaid, before anything is said.

If we attempt to answer the question, why do people attend the theatre? we may partially answer another question, is the satire in the theatre effectual? The primary motive of most individuals in going to the theatre is to be entertained, never to listen to a sermon. Some seek the theatre as a haven of retirement from the cold realities of the world. Occasionally others desire to extend their cultural background by seeing the classical plays which they have read. Still others go to satisfy their curiosity. More often audiences are in attendance to worship at the shrine of some hero-actor. It is seldom, however, that those who sit before the footlights today are suddenly converted or moved to action. They may delight in seeing even their own weaknesses satirized on the stage before them but just how much they are affected by such performances is difficult to estimate except in plays which deal with problems of the masses.

If George Kelly merely wished to amuse audiences in his comedy, The Torch-Bearers, the results have no doubt surpassed his expectations. The

little theatres which Mr. Kelly satirizes have adopted his play as their own. It is one of the most popular in the repertory of community theatres as well. If, however, the playwright's intention in writing this play was to quell the ambitions of amateur actors and strike a death blow to the non-professional theatres, then his efforts have been in vain.

Plays exposing corrupt politics have seldom done much more than provoke laughter. In 1894 Charles Hoyt satirized the methods of electing incompetent representatives to Congress in A Texas Steer. Political conditions today are so little altered that the play is still frequently revived successively and proves to be very amusing after forty-seven years. Extravagance and waste of public funds in fantastic and unnecessary government projects, as we have seen presented in Both Your Houses, seems to be more the present day situation than when Maxwell Anderson brought this menace to light in 1932. Many who laughed at the "New Deal" in I'd Rather Be Right were no doubt among those who went to the polls in November 1940 and re-elected President Roosevelt, who had been so genially lampooned by George M. Cohan.

Some satirical plays lose their potency when the message is no longer timely as in Holiday or Nice People. These plays belong to the "flapper" age. Even though they may have been startling at that time, they evidently were not very effective from the corrective standpoint. The daring actions of the youth of that period seem but mild diversions now. With the change of opinions concerning woman's place in the world today The Famous Mrs. Fair could not have been far reaching in its criticism of the double standard of the sexes. Since public opinion has changed so completely, regarding the freedom of youth, and the woman in the business world, these plays are now of value only as sociological documents of the immediate after-the-war period.

What Price Glory? was deemed by many a severe indictment against war at the time it was first produced. If this was the playwright's purpose his efforts have only been rewarded by worse conflict than the one he so ardently sought to avert. Robert E. Sherwood reproduced the Russian invasion of Finland in an ironic picture of the horrors and futility of war in There Shall Be No Night. The fiery preachment against the Nazis in certain passages almost reaches the range of invective. Regardless of Sherwood's warning the map of Europe is changing so rapidly that we cannot but feel that night is drawing nearer.

If Abe Lincoln in Illinois was written with a message of warning to the citizens of the United States to preserve their national unity and guard against an encounter with destructive forces, it would be difficult to believe that the message is at all convincing or effective now. The flash of headlines in the newspapers are daily reminders of the precariousness of our own political picture. The opposing forces of conservative constitutionalists against revolutionists, and the pacifists clashing with war-mongers does not assure us of the strong unified front for which Lincoln so ardently pleaded.

Inestimable, but, perhaps, more effective irony is to be found in various scenes of the 1939-1940 Pulitzer Prize play, The Time of Your Life, which was written by William Saroyan. Some of the side play offers more satire than the center of the stage activities. The half-witted creature, who remains in one corner of the water-front saloon all evening infatuated with the unyielding slot-machine, is a more successful teacher than many a sincere street-corner preacher in the slums. When at last he triumphantly shouts his good luck by displaying a small handful of nickles, a little American flag flies up from the gambling device ironically to remind us of the gullibility

of millions of a nation's citizenry.

Plays which criticize social injustice and economic depression like Elmer Rice's The Adding Machine, Eugene O'Neill's The Hairy Ape, Maxwell Anderson's Saturday's Children and many of the more recent plays of the "leftists" like Clifford Odet's Awake and Sing have only been effective with sympathetic audiences. However, they have not been instrumental, it would seem, in obtaining jobs for the jobless or raising the standards of living for millions of the working class.

Despite the fact that we see little objective benefits derived from the use of satire in American drama it still persists and it is not to be subdued in the future anymore than it has in the past. Certain statistical findings and observations regarding recent satirical tendencies in our drama make a prophetic statement of the continued use of satire by American playwrights possible.

Recent successful revivals of the satirical and ironic plays of Henrik Ibsen, G. B. Shaw and Sir James Barrie in the United States attest to the popularity of the critical type of plays like Ghosts, Pygmalion and the Admirable Crichton.

The Pulitzer Prize play list from the 1917-1918 season to that of 1939-1940 includes ten plays out of twenty-two which have, at least in part, satirical strains. Four of them are definite satires. Three of these, Why Marry?, Of Thee I Sing and Both Your Houses, have already been discussed. The fourth, You Can't Take It With You, written by Kaufman and Hart, was the Pulitzer play in the year 1936-1937. The last award for 1939-1940 was given to William Saroyan for his novelty production, The Time of Your Life, which has choice bits of ironic criticism mingled with more obvious satirical

thrusts throughout. This play was also chosen as the prize production for the Drama Critic's Circle Award in the same year.

Many of the plays presented in both Chicago and New York during the present season 1940-1941 point to the fact that satirical plays are more popular than ever before. Some of the satirical plays presented in Chicago this year we easily recall because of the long runs they had. Life With Father, which has satiric suggestions in it, heads the list for an all time record having passed the year mark. New Pins and Needles played for several months to full houses taken from the ranks of the general public notwithstanding the fact that it is a Labor Union production. Other satiric types which could not boast such lengthy runs are Shaw's Pygmalion, another Kaufman and Hart production, The Man Who Came To Dinner, Joseph Kesserling's Arsenic and Old Lace and Robert Sherwood's There Shall Be No Night.

Another indication that satires are one of the most popular dramatic forms in the United States may be recognized by examining the list of "Long Runs On Broadway" which Burns Mantle has compiled and set up in The Best Plays of 1939-1940.¹ If we judge by the number of performances indicated after the name of each play we can easily observe that the satires, or those having satirical implications, have been among those which ran the longest time. The following are some of the plays thus noted: Pins and Needles (1,110), You Can't Take It With You (837), The Women (657) and The Show-Off (571). If the theatre-going public support plays of this type so enthusiastically we may naturally conclude that playwrights and producers will probably give them what they want in the future.

Regardless of these observations it still is difficult to conjecture

¹p. 447.

what future actually lies ahead in any field of human endeavor today. Drama, however, has always integrated itself with the problems of life in war or peace. Although the dramatic output has always been very meager during a period of war it arises with greater vigor after each attack and takes on new problems which come as a direct issue of warfare. Satire seems to thrive under such circumstances. In the following extract from his book, Letters to X, Mr. H. J. Massingham assures us of the continual service of satire.

Until we climb the last slopes of Utopia, satire with its accusing, revealing question, "Quo tendimus?" can never but be of benefit to humanity. As the keeper of national conscience (forgive my triteness) the satirist, if he is approved of his own generation, will be a Record Office for posterity. For satire is no less a religious vocation than most other forms of art.²

The great need for Americans today is a national theatre in which would be presented plays that lean neither too far to the left nor too far to the right. Sponsored by the government, the admission prices could be as low as, or lower than, the prices of the moving picture theatres. With a properly selected board, representative of all classes of society, the masses could be better informed, entertained and instructed than they are now, especially in public questions of the day. Then satire in drama might become a useful instrument to enlighten, guide and warn the public in the vital problems of life. With the masses attending the theatre as they did in Aristophanes' day, the theatre would become a necessary activity in their lives. So-called dramatic critics, theatrical syndicates, or producers with radical ideas would no longer control the theatres and the opinions of the public.

Since present conditions of living furnish splendid and abundant material for the satirist it is quite safe to say that our dramas will continue

²
p. 24.

to be bitterly satiric for at least some time to come in the future. Our present world of Communism, Fascism, Nazism, New Dealism, Aryanism, imperial conquests, political strife, and the most overwhelming of world wars, offers a wealth of ideas for satiric drama now and in the near future. Probably, unless human nature changes, there always will be dramatists to satirize the foibles and follies of mankind.

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The thesis, "Satirical Tendencies in Modern American Drama, 1880-1940", written by Marie H. Kelly, has been accepted by the Graduate School with reference to form, and by the readers whose name appears below, with reference to content. It is, therefore, accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Dr. Zabel

May 23, 1940

Dr. Steward

May 31, 1940